University of Alberta

The Role of the Department Head as a Change Agent in the Implementation of the Newest Alberta English Program of Studies

by

Lana Black

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Dedication

To my family—past, present, and future

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to understand the strategies, skills, achievements, rewards, and frustrations of the high school English department head working as a curriculum leader in the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies in Alberta. Two case studies, one prior to implementation and one during implementation of the newest provincial program of studies, are developed. The research methodology selected for this study is qualitative case-study research. The study also considers the high school English department head working as a change agent in an urban decentralized Alberta school district. The secondary English department head in a postmodern urban high school in Alberta who works as a curriculum-change agent works with his or her teachers to ensure that they are implementing the program of studies to the best of their abilities to ensure the highest level of achievement possible for every student enrolled in an English class in the school. The department head is responsible for management tasks but serves first and foremost as a curriculum leader. Ongoing improvement will depend on principals who can foster the conditions necessary for sustained educational reform in a complex and ever-changing society. This should include cultivating other curriculum leaders in schools, such as secondary subject department heads. This includes serving as a curriculum-change agent within the department, the school, and the larger school community. It will be very difficult for the department head to meet these expectations without support that includes outlining and providing adequate training, providing a clear definition of the department head's duties in a written roles and responsibilities statement, and providing adequate time within the school day for the department head to serve as a manager and a curriculum leader within the department.

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CHAPTER 1
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This study was designed to identify the strategies, skills, achievements, rewards, and frustrations of the high school English department head working as a change agent in the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies in Alberta (Alberta Learning, 2003). Previous studies (Beaton, 1985; Henderson, 1993; Miles, 1985; Stoops, 1990; Strudler, 1987) have used quantitative methodologies. This study uses qualitative case-study research informed in particular by the work of Merriam (1998). As well, the study considers the high school English department head working as a change agent in an urban, decentralized school district. My research was guided by the following research questions:

- How did the current set of role expectations for the position of high school department head develop?
- What is the situational context within which high school English department heads do their work?
- What change-agent strategies do English department heads use in their role as change agents?
- What change-agent skills do English department heads use in their role as change agents?
- What outcomes result from the activities of high school English department heads in their role as curriculum leaders and change agents?
- What are the perceived rewards and frustrations experienced by high school English department heads in the performance of their duties?

Coming to the Question

Researcher Background: An Autobiographical Approach

Theme for English B[1]

by Langston Hughes

The instructor said,

> *Go home and write*
> *a page tonight.*
> *And let that page come out of you—*
> *Then, it will be true.*

I wonder if it's that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.
I went to school there, then Durham, then here
to this college on the hill above Harlem.
I am the only colored student in my class.
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what
I feel and see and hear. Harlem, I hear you:
hear you, hear me—we two—you, me, talk on this page.
(I hear New York, too.) Me—who?
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,
or records—Bessie, bop, or Bach.
I guess being colored doesn't make me *not* like
the same things other folks like who are other races.
So will my page be colored that I write?
Being me, it will not be white.
But it will be
a part of you, instructor.
You are white—
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.
That's American.
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!
As I learn from you,
I guess you learn from me—
although you're older—and white—
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

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[1] *Note.* From *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes,* 1990, New York: Knopf. Copyright 1990 by Knopf. Reprinted with permission.

Early Years

I grew up in a small Alberta prairie town. My grandparents on my father's side had settled in the area in the early 1900s. The major difference between my family and the others in the town was that we were Jewish. My mother had had an orthodox conversion prior to the Second World War, and I had both Jewish and Christian relatives. My family lived a Jewish lifestyle, and my mom's family was Protestant (mostly Lutheran and United). From an early age, I knew that there was more than one viewpoint from which to see the world.

In their *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Lincoln and Denzin (1994, p. 11) write, "Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity." After I got married, my husband and I joined a conservative synagogue where men and women were equals in conducting the services, and I left behind the orthodox form of Judaism with which I had never felt comfortable. Although I have remained in the Jewish religion, I have no illusions about it being the only true religion. My search for alignment between my beliefs and my religion is ongoing and unfolding—a search opened to me because I was raised between the Jewish and Christian religions and nothing was a given. I was raised in a way that did not allow me to view one religion as the only true, right religion.

Unlike the community in which my father had grown up, at least to my knowledge, my hometown had become anti-Semitic; without my understanding why, I was excluded from a great deal during my childhood. I did not socialize, except with two or three girlfriends and a few family friends. My adolescent years were spent counting the days until I could go away to university and make the social and personal choices

available there. It was late into my adult years before I left the scars of religious hatred behind me and came to understand how this most difficult part of my life had shaped my way of looking at the world and, in doing so, provided the point of view required for me to do the research work I have undertaken throughout my career.

My understanding resonates with that of Smith (1991), who states that he began to develop his hermeneutic perspective as a young boy, when he travelled from country to country and culture to culture because of his father's work. He goes on to say that those who are safe and secure in the belief that their culture is the only "right culture" are not likely to be open to the possibilities present in other cultures. However, for those of us who have lived among and between different cultural and religious groups, the hermeneutic philosophy was present early on in our journey. At that time, I did not attach the label *hermeneutics* to my philosophy. It was simply how I approached the world because of my childhood experience of living within and between my two religious heritages. My place among and between religions provided me with the opportunity to see the world in a way similar to and in keeping with Smith's definition of hermeneutic thinking. My current understanding of hermeneutics is consistent with that of Smith (1991):

> Whenever we are engaged in the activity of interpreting our lives and the world around us, we are engaging in what the Greeks called "practical philosophy" (Gadamer, 1993), an activity linkable to the character Hermes in the Greek pantheon. Hermes, as well as being the deliverer of messages between the gods and from the gods to the mortals on earth, is well known for a number of other qualities as well, such as eternal youthfulness, friendliness, prophetic power and fertility. In a sense, all of these features are at work in the hermeneutic endeavour to this day, as the practice of interpretation attempts to show what is involved in different disciplines; and in the service of human generatively and good faith is engaged in the mediation of meaning. Modern students of hermeneutics should be mindful that their interpretations could lead them into trouble with "authorities." (p. 187)

For as long as I can remember, I have been curious about the world around me and willing to examine the ways of others in an attempt to understand their views of the world and why the world as we know it works the way it does. These examinations were an outgrowth of my childhood, in which accepting a single way of life was not possible. Not unlike Hermes, my questioning and my lack of immediate acceptance of the status quo often gave the authorities with whom I interacted the impression that I was bright, abrasive, and willing to challenge the status quo. From my point of view, I was bright, curious, inquisitive, and always looking for ways to understand my environment to improve the work being done. It was these hermeneutic qualities within me that made research work, in particular qualitative research work, of interest to me as a doctoral student.

University Years

I was accepted to the University of Alberta for the first time in 1969 and entered the Faculty of Arts with a major in anthropology and a minor in English. Social studies had always been my strongest interest because I was fascinated by cultures from other lands—cultures that I could unearth en route to becoming the next Margaret Mead. However, the number of coed digs available at the time was limited, and the belief that there was little opportunity for a young woman to find good-paying work in anthropology led me to instead complete a degree in Canadian studies with a major in political science and a minor in English.

After my first degree, I travelled in the Middle East and Europe for nearly 12 months. Most of this time was spent on a kibbutz in Israel during and after the 1973 Yom

Kippur War. While on the kibbutz, I had an experience that further supported my previous experiences in regard to point of view. While lying in bed one evening listening to the BBC news, I took the time to listen to the English news reports from London, Cairo, and Jerusalem. All three accounts of the same battle were different. The differences related to who had won the battle, how many men had been injured or killed, and who was winning the war. It was abundantly clear to me that bias was at work. This war was not unlike the war waged in educational circles between the traditions of consciousness and the critical tradition:

> Post structuralists have helped readers to understand that tradition itself is predicated on the desire to put interpretation to rest. . . . One of the most important contributions hermeneutics makes to all contemporary social theory and practice, then, not just to curriculum and pedagogy, is in observing the way in which the meaning of anything is always arrived at referentially and relationally rather than, for want of a better word, absolutely. (Smith, 1993, p. 197)

Bias is present and must be accounted for in all human situations. This lesson in point of view and bias has stayed with me and has been most helpful in my dealings with people in my private and professional communities and in the research I have undertaken.

After completing my arts degree, I returned to the University of Alberta and completed a professional after-degree diploma with a major in secondary social studies in the Faculty of Education.

Teaching Career

I received a contract with my school board in the spring of my diploma year and began teaching in September 1975. I was sent out to junior high school to teach language arts and social studies. Because I was female, the "powers that were" decided I should

teach language arts rather than social studies, which I have continued to do for most of my teaching career.

After four years in junior high school, I transferred to high school, which set the stage for my next project: establishing the Edmonton Women's Network. A group of women educators and I started the network, which provided connecting points for over 400 women. The organization provided me with a nomination for a YMCA Tribute to Women Award in the Women Helping Women category, a $10,000 May Graduate Scholarship, and the topic for my master's thesis, "Membership Perceptions of the Edmonton Women's Network" (Black, 1983). The thesis was completed in the Educational Administration Department (now Policy Studies) at the University of Alberta. It was a quantitative piece of research much within the accepted research practices for education administration students in the '70s. It was the start of a long career working as a teacher-researcher who would experiment with and change my work environment. Then, I would write up and present my research. Always present were the questions, How can I improve on the work being done to benefit my students? and, Where else does my work fit in the education community? The hermeneutic questions of effectiveness and of the connections between and among the macro- and micro-environments (Smith, 1991) became the motivating force behind my work as an educator involved in teaching, researching, writing, and presenting within and outside the education community.

Other Opportunities

Although I have been employed by my school district for the past 30 years, I have had the opportunity to work in a variety of positions that allowed me to develop a

perspective on the education community beyond the walls of my classroom and the language arts community in my district. I have served as an intern in the deputy minister's office and as a policy consultant with Alberta Learning, a supervisor in Administrative Support Services in my district's central office, and a department head of English in two urban high schools. I have also been department head of social studies, English as a second language, and second languages. Currently, I am the International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator at my high school.

These varied work opportunities have allowed me to develop a perspective that incorporates different views on education, in particular language arts education. Although I respect the views of my colleagues, I have often held views about language arts education that are different from those of my department head colleagues who have had limited work experience outside of their own classrooms, departments, and even schools. Pursuing a master's degree in educational administration also shaped my differences in attitude and perspective. I asked different questions, held different opinions, and saw my role as an English department head differently. As Ellis (1998) writes, "Nor is a uniquely correct interpretation possible . . . since perception is interpretation. . . . By sharing the knowledge from each of our locations through dialogue, we developed a fuller understanding of the places we inhabit together" (p. 8). My department functioned within an educational community that went beyond our school and our district while meeting the specific needs of our student community. Viewing my work and the decisions to be made in my role of department head with a different lens, context, and scope—developed through different life and educational experiences and a variety of positions other than that of department head—allowed me to ask different questions, or questions outside the

established English language arts culture in my school and school district. Practising outside the parameters of the accepted English language arts culture helped me to view my work differently. Taking a different approach helped me to improve our department's teaching of the curriculum and to ask the questions that laid the foundation for my professional presentations at conferences, my articles in professional journals, and the research topic for this doctoral dissertation—the role of the English department head in the implementation of Alberta Learning's newest high school English language arts program of studies. My still unlabelled but ongoing hermeneutic perspective toward my work was developed through my atypical personal and educational backgrounds, travel throughout the world, and varied work experiences at the local and provincial levels of education. It is a perspective that I believe has allowed me to contribute to language arts education in creative and innovative ways. My varied background has allowed me to view my environment through a different lens—a lens no better or worse than the lenses of others, but a lens that allows me to contribute a different and perhaps unique point of view to the ongoing conversation about teaching, researching, writing, and presenting in public education and its language arts community.

Professional Development

Throughout my career, I have had the opportunity to participate in and present at many professional development activities throughout North America. The conference that had the greatest impact on my attitudes toward English curriculum and leadership was the U.S.-based National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) convention in Orlando, Florida, in 1994. As Smith (1991, p. 196) states, "Pedagogy is most basically an act of cultural reproduction and transmission. Research involves getting the facts of a particular

case right and conveying them accurately." Being at a conference with thousands of English teachers from all over North America, Hawaii, and the Bahamas made me aware of the power for cultural reproduction and transmission vested in the English teachers' canon, and the role this canon has played in preparing our students to live democratic lives. I came away humbled by our collective ability to shape our students' capacity to think, reason, and abstract. As well, I had a new understanding of the social power vested in the work of English teachers.

At the conference, I also participated in the Council of English Leadership (CEL). However, the most significant activity for me was attending a session by author, lecturer, and rabbi Chiam Potok. His presentation dealt with his books and his experiences as an American war chaplain in Southeast Asia. Living in Asia placed his orthodox Jewish religious beliefs in juxtaposition with the Asian way of life. Stepping outside the comfort of his homogeneous background had a profound influence on his thinking about his Jewish identity. He captured his experiences in Asia in his 1992 novel *I Am the Clay.*

My own background and my experiences of comparing my religious background with those of others resonated through my thoughts during Potok's presentation. His most significant comment, for me, was that youths who grow up without strong cultural contexts or between two cultures, as I had, often adopt new cultures as young adults. Often, according to Potok, the cultures adopted by intelligent, unaffiliated youths have been introduced to them in university. I believe that the university, on an unconscious level, became my first place of belonging and my adopted culture—a culture I have returned to as a student, researcher, and writer throughout my adult life. My language, culture, and point of view came into being as a result of my childhood experiences.

Although not labelled as such, my lens was a hermeneutic lens that found its voice, its adopted culture, and a sense of belonging at the university.

Significant Strangers

Throughout life, some of us are lucky enough to have strangers come into our lives and assist us in some way. I have met several key individuals who have made a difference in the way my professional life has unfolded.

The person I want to highlight is the principal with whom I worked for the bulk of my work as a department head, particularly an English department head. This principal was not born in Alberta but came here when her husband accepted an academic position at one of our universities. She came to our school district from a Catholic school district when it became clear that, because she was not a Roman Catholic, she would never be considered for a leadership position with a Catholic school board.

We first met in the 1970s and, over the next two decades, she had a tremendous influence on my career. It was evident very early in our professional relationship that, because of her unique background and educational experiences, she had developed a different way of looking at schools and leadership. She saw in me the potential to assist her in her work as a high school principal. I believed that she had an excellent understanding of curriculum and what was essential in implementing curriculum in ways that improved student achievement. She was clear on what was required and believed that I could do the job for her.

We worked together in two high schools at which she was the principal and I was the English department head. She supported an atypical department head like me and gave me complete autonomy to build our English department as I believed it should be

built. Without her support, I would not have had an opportunity to do the work I did. Given that I was atypical and an outsider, it is unlikely that a principal steeped solely in the mainstream culture of my district would have seen my potential as a school leader and given me the opportunities that this principal did. As Ellis (1998, p. 32) writes, "One makes the path by walking it." This principal created a climate that protected me and let me shape my department in ways that nurtured a learning environment for me as a curriculum leader and for the teachers and students in my department. My dissertation topic is a natural outgrowth of this work. Her last contribution came in her support of my paid sabbatical to complete my residency year for my degree.

Role as Department Head

This dissertation is, to reshape the words of Margaret Laurence (1976), work that stands on work that came before it. Like my master's thesis (Black, 1983), this research project is an outgrowth of my personal experiences and my work—specifically, my work as an English high school department head. It arose out of questions that emerged from my role as department head. Was I as effective as I could have been? How do other effective English department heads do their work? Is it possible to share this knowledge with department heads and other interested educators?

I have come to define the term *effective* in relation to the role of the department head as demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to serve as a change agent in the implementation of Alberta's high school English language arts program of studies. After nine years in the position, I defined my primary role to be that of a change agent who enabled department members to teach the program of studies in ways that provided success for as many of our high school English students as possible. Because of

our district's focus on student achievement, success was measured by the percentage of students who met the acceptable standard of achievement on their 30-1 and 30-2 diploma examinations set by Alberta Learning. My desire to research how other department heads function in their role as change agents and a desire to contribute to this area through research and writing to assist other department heads in their work as curricular-change agents led me to become a doctoral student, researcher, and writer in this area.

Throughout my work as department head, I worked with the teachers in my department to improve their professional practices to, in turn, improve their students' achievement results. The work I did with the teachers was based on the following assumptions and values, which I have held throughout my professional life:

- Teachers in the province of Alberta have a legal responsibility to teach Alberta's high school English language arts curriculum as it is outlined in the program of studies (Alberta Learning, 2003).
- It is the responsibility of classroom teachers to make decisions about teaching the program of studies in a manner that allows for the greatest level of success for every student in their classrooms. This responsibility should not be infringed upon unless the principal of the school decides that it is in the best interest of the students to do so.
- The department head's primary role, as a curricular-change agent, is to work with the teachers in the department to ensure that they are implementing the program of studies to the best of their abilities.
- The department head is a teacher, like the other department members, and all change-agent work undertaken in implementing the program of studies

is done in a collegial way that respects the professional autonomy of teachers in their classrooms.

- Teachers continue to grow throughout their teaching careers, and the department head works to support teacher growth in keeping with the goals of each teacher and the department.
- When teachers are teaching the curriculum as outlined in the program of studies, student achievement will improve. Student achievement is measured by the results students achieve on diploma examinations set by Alberta Learning.
- Leadership, in a professional and collegial environment, is undertaken by the department head in ways that create professional autonomy and make every teacher in the department a leader in his or her own way.

These assumptions and values permeated my work as a department head. It would take many chapters to describe in detail what I undertook in my role as a curricular-change agent and as a curricular leader. But that is for another book. The following examples are extensive enough to demonstrate how I worked and are some of the initiatives of which I am most proud.

To ensure that the program of studies was being taught as it should be, I believed that it was important to have each teacher work with the document in great detail. When I began my work, it was evident that not all the teachers in the department had read the program of studies. So, the first step was to provide each teacher with a copy of the document. As the years went on, the work with the program of studies became more prescriptive. When I came on as department head, there was a department handbook that

had been written by the previous department head. It looked at what was to be taught and which resources were to be used at each grade level. I had chaired the Grade 10 handbook committee when I had taught in the department the first time. I continued using this document as a vehicle for making sure that all teachers were working with the program of studies and then began a project to improve the information provided in the handbook.

The project involved revising the department handbook. The revisions were done by grade level and by course. A committee, with a chair, was established for each course. Then, a teacher was assigned the task of compiling and editing the work done at each grade level. The entire department provided input, and two other teachers in the department edited the entire handbook. The handbook was expanded to include lists of all the teacher and student resources available in our department, Alberta Learning resource lists, video titles, and genre terminology lists. The purpose of the rewrite was to develop a handbook that supported and outlined the requirements of the program of studies while taking into consideration our student population. At the end of the project, an external consultant was brought in to work with each committee chair and provide input to ensure that each part of the handbook met all the requirements set out by the province and by our school district. I worked with the two project editors to complete the handbook, and a finished copy was produced for each department member. The handbook was to be revised as required. Through a collegial, committee-driven project, teachers came to an understanding of what they were required to teach.

Teacher autonomy in the classroom was central in our department. Like most high school departments, ours housed a variety of personalities and talents. One project that

supported a particular methodology for teaching student writing used by some of the teachers was the introduction of the writer's workshop into our classrooms. A teacher, who had been made aware of this strategy by a student teacher, expressed an interest in implementing it in her classroom. I worked with her to assist in its implementation by providing teacher resources, opportunities to participate in professional development activities at the district level, and ongoing encouragement and moral support as required.

Not all teachers in the department embraced the writer's workshop, but support was provided for any teachers willing to try other teaching strategies and methodologies that suited them. A program that allowed for individual progress was developed for English as a second language students. For students who needed assistance with reading, two teachers wrote a three-credit reading course, and for academically gifted students, the Advanced Placement (AP) program was first offered in the English department because the department's teachers wanted to implement it.

Many teachers in the department emerged as teacher leaders. As department head, I facilitated and supported the initiatives undertaken by the teachers in my department. I believed in their professional expertise and provided collegial support for a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies used to teach the program of studies.

Professional development opportunities were always available. The activity I found to be the most successful was part of the performance-review process required in each department. In our department, teachers did teacher observations with their department colleagues as part of their performance review. For example, if two teachers were teaching *Hamlet,* they would arrange to observe each other's teaching. After the observations, they would provide each other with written responses to—not evaluations

of—what they had observed. It was a wonderful way of sharing teacher practices, and it alleviated the feeling of isolation often felt by teachers, who teach alone in their classrooms. This further developed the teachers' understanding of the ways the program of studies could be taught, created teacher leaders, and created a sense of community and vitality in our department. As well as observing each other, the teachers were encouraged to attend PD within and outside the district. Eventually, many of the teachers were presenting PD sessions as well as attending them.

One extracurricular activity that allowed the teachers to develop their creative talents and contribute to student achievement was the literary anthology published by our department's creative-writing club. The teacher involved in this project developed her writing and editorial skills while doing the same for the students with whom she worked. This creative endeavour offered outside the regular school day enhanced our students' capacities to write and think and informally worked toward improving student achievement. By supporting this activity, I helped the teacher and the students to learn and grow. The teacher went on to be a teacher leader in this area, to offer PD sessions to other teachers on how to produce writing anthologies with high school students, and to be honoured for her work by the district. This showcased our students' work and the work of their teacher at the school level and beyond.

Throughout my time as department head, I also supervised the development of standard-testing instruments or common final exams through committee work at each grade level. Our department produced its best-ever results on the provincial diploma exams and moved to the top of the English department rankings in the district based on provincial student achievement results.

The work I did as department head was more than just a job; it was my passion. Helping students to achieve through effectively implementing curriculum, developing teacher excellence, and working through collegial leadership were my goals—goals built on a value system with successful students and teachers at its core.

Why This Study?

Curious to know how other department heads work with their colleagues to implement the program of studies and wanting to connect my work with that of my peers, I formulated the question, What is the role of the English department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest high school English language arts program of studies? To research this question, I decided to undertake a qualitative case study of two English department heads.

My interest in the work of my peers was partly piqued by the organizational structure of my school district. The district pioneered the use of school-based management, which has since been implemented throughout Alberta. With school-based budgeting came open boundaries. This allowed each student enrolled in our district to attend his or her high school of choice, not a specific high school in a designated neighbourhood. This placed high schools in the position of competing with each other for students. Consequently, it became disadvantageous for schools and their department heads to share professional information and practices that would assist in curriculum implementation and improve student achievement in all district schools. So, even though department heads met regularly, little (if any) real information on the day-to-day role of the department head and on curriculum implementation was shared. Therefore, I asked

the question, What have other successful department heads in Alberta done to implement the curriculum in their departments?

As well, I realized that the change in the roles and responsibilities of principals in a decentralized school system that served large urban high schools required middle management or department heads in high schools to serve as curricular leaders while the principals worked on the school budget, public relations, and all the other aspects of running the large not-for-profit organization we call an urban high school. The aspect of curriculum leadership that most interested me was that of the curriculum leader serving as a curriculum-change agent. I believed that my study could contribute to research related to English curriculum leadership, middle management or the role of the department head, and high school management in a decentralized school district. Also, my own work, done in more than one high school, made me aware of the individual nature of high schools and the impossibility of transferring, without adaptation, the successes of one department to another.

So, I set out to do a qualitative case study to add stories other than my own to the research and academic conversation about curriculum implementation in the English department of a large urban high school. What is a case study? Merriam (1998) says:

> I have concluded that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case. Smith's (1978) notion of the case as a "bounded system" comes closest to my understanding of what defines this type of research. Stake (1995) adds, "The case is an integral system" (p. 2). Both definitions allow me to see the case as a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries. I can "fence in" what I am going to study. The case then could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, and a community; a specific policy and so on. Miles and Huberman (1994) think of the case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). They graphically present it as a circle with a heart in it. The heart is the focus of the study, while the circle "defines the edge of the case, what will not be studied" (p. 25). (p. 27)

In writing the case studies about the role of the English department head as a curriculum leader, I have communicated the research work using a variety of texts. Alberta's newest English language arts program of studies (Alberta Learning, 2003) teaches students to select and use the text that best communicates the ideas being shared. In keeping with this aspect of the program of studies, I have selected and used texts that effectively communicate the research. Autobiography, poetry, quotations, literature reviews, and narratives have been used to communicate the research in ways that make the work as real, convincing, compelling, thought-provoking, enjoyable, and meaningful as it can be for the reader.

The two qualitative case studies I undertook were about the subject department head as a curriculum leader and change agent. I was curious to see how the department heads in my study worked as curriculum leaders, specifically curriculum-change agents. Whatever the specifics, I learned more about other department heads and how they work. In doing so, I have contributed to the research literature on the role of the department head as a curriculum leader. The research done in the micro-environment of the two case studies will contribute to the macro-environment of other high school English departments. The research will assist department heads in large urban high schools in implementing the English language arts curriculum for the benefit of their students. In the process, the hermeneutic imagination will work to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to share how they reverberate within grander schemes of things.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

> Where thoughts come from, whence meaning, remains a mystery. The page does not write itself, but by finding for analysis, the right ambience, the right moment, by reading and rereading the accounts, by deep thinking, then understanding creeps forward and your page is printed. (Stake, 1995, p. 73)

Methodology

Background to Qualitative Research

Hermeneutic Inquiry

It is important to begin a discussion of my qualitative research with a discussion of hermeneutic inquiry. Smith (1991) provides a historical look at hermeneutics from Aristotle to Gadamer. He begins by defining *hermeneutics:*

> Whenever we are engaged in the activity of interpreting our lives and the world around us, we are engaging in what the Greeks called "practical philosophy" (Gadamer, 1983). . . . The hermeneutic endeavour to this day, as the practice of interpretation attempts to show what is at work in different disciplines and, in the service of human generativity and good faith, is engaged in the mediation of meaning. (p. 187)

In educational terms, hermeneutic imagination has prompted educators to think about what we mean when we use words such as *curriculum, research,* and *pedagogy.* Gadamer (1975) argues that the appropriate method for interpreting any phenomenon can be disclosed only by the phenomenon itself through a kind of Socratic dialogical engagement between question and phenomenon. He also supports a hermeneutics that attempts to hold the structure of understanding together within a language of understanding. Gadamer's hermeneutics supports recent work in the study of narrative and story (Gergin and Gergin, Polrinhorne, and Sabin, as cited in Smith, 1991). These

works continue from an affirmation of the traceably constitutive nature of human understanding and its roots in recollection and memory.

Smith (1991) also discusses the nature of hermeneutic inquiry in relation to two of the currently dominant traditions of educational theory in Western civilization: the critical tradition and the tradition of consciousness. Both traditions began by wanting to get things right:

> But Hermes is neither concerned to make a word mean one thing and one thing only, nor is one preconceived way of doing things the only way. The hermeneutic imagination constantly asks for what is at work in particular ways of speaking and acting in order to facilitate an ever-deepening appreciation of that wholeness and integrity of the world that must be present for thought and action to be possible at all. . . . As Paulo Freire (1971) has put it, reality is always "hinged." Reality is always reality-for-us but it always opens out into a broader world which serves or can serve to enrich our understanding of who we are. (p. 197)

This understanding of hermeneutics has implications for educators. It requires that we consider what we mean by *world* when we speak of the world of curriculum, research, and pedagogy. This consideration is essential given the way the hermeneutic tradition has shown that all understanding takes place within an articulation of whole and part. However, hermeneutics contributes beyond the whole field of education, curriculum, and pedagogy by showing how the meaning of anything is always arrived at referentially and relationally, rather than absolutely.

Smith (1991) presents a number of requirements that must be attended to by those considering using hermeneutical formulations in human sciences research. The first requirement is the ability to develop a deep attentiveness to language, the second is a deepening of one's sense of the basic interpretability of life itself, and the third is an understanding of hermeneutics' overall interest in the questions of human meaning and of how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on. The fourth

requirement, which Smith considers implicit in all the others, is inherent creativity. "Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it" (p. 201): Smith's thinking underscores the hermeneutic infrastructure present in qualitative research.

Ellis (1998) discusses interpretive inquiry as a formal research process. Her work begins with a discussion of the central themes of hermeneutics. The first theme is the inherently creative nature of interpretation. The second theme, also pointed out in Smith (1991), centres on the way "good interpretation involves a playing back and forth between the specific and the general, micro and the macro" (Ellis, 1998, p. 190). Working holistically, "good interpretation can only be pursued with a constant movement back and forth between where the expression is lodged" (Smith, 1993, p. 16). The third theme is the pivotal role of language in human understanding.

Next, Ellis (1998) provides the more tangible steps of the research process. First is the entry question. The question must be posed with openness, humility, and genuine engagement. A useful question is not rhetorical and does not imply an answer. An example of an appropriate question is, How can I help this high school teacher who is having trouble with her math class?

Once the question has been selected, the progress of an interpretive inquiry project can be visualized as a series of loops in a spiral. The data is unfolding and uncovered in a forward and backward motion on the spiral. The forward portion of the arc involves pre-understanding and concerned engagement. The backward portion of the arc involves evaluation and seeing what was not seen before. The forward and backward arc is clearly explained by Packer and Addison (1989). In the forward arc of the hermeneutic circle—projection—one uses "forestructure" to make some initial sense of

the research participant, text, or data. That is, one uses one's existing preconceptions, pre-understandings, or prejudices—including purposes, interests, and values—to interpret. This initial approach is unavoidable. In the backward arc, one evaluates the initial interpretation and attempts to see what went unseen before. In this evaluation process, one reconsiders the interpretation by re-examining the data for confirmation, contradictions, gaps, or inconsistencies. This re-examination may require charts, summaries, or lists to uncover patterns or relationships difficult to discern when one considers a large amount of information simultaneously. In this process, Ellis (1998) notes, it is as important to ask what is absent in the data as to ask what is present. Re-examining the data is a deliberative process. Ellis believes that, in order to see what was previously invisible, one's question must be genuine and one must search for the coherence and reasonableness in the behaviour of others.

The last step of the research process is writing the interpretive account. Regardless of the format, components, or sequence of the interpretive account, Ellis (1998) says that it must function as a well-argued essay. Ellis strongly supports the use of personal story or autobiography at the beginning of the discourse:

> The personal story provides access to the writer's perspective and the meanings that words and events hold for him or her, creating an opportunity for more shared meaning at the beginning of the text. This can certainly make the interpretive account more comprehensible. A signature of interpretive inquiry is self-conscious reflection; and whenever it occurs, this reflection is the thread that holds the research story together. A thread which is both personal and evolving. (p. 32)

Theoretical Underpinnings of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), has five specific features. However, not all studies exhibit all five features; some may not draw on one or

more of the features. The issue is not whether a piece of research is absolutely qualitative but, rather, the degree to which the research is qualitative. The five features of qualitative research are as follows:

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher as the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than merely outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
- Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) note that, whether stated or implied, all research is guided by some theoretical orientation. Good researchers are cognizant of their orientation and use it as a framework to help them collect and analyze data. Qualitative researchers have a concern for meaning that leads into the theoretical orientation of the qualitative approach. The theoretical orientation or theory of qualitative research is like the definition of *theory* in sociology and anthropology. It is a paradigm or a loose connection of logically held-together assumptions.

Phenomenological Approach

Most qualitative researchers look at the world from some sort of phenomenological perspective. Researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand what events and interactions mean to ordinary people in particular situations. Phenomenologists do not assume that they know what things mean to the people they are studying (Douglas, 1976). Phenomenological inquiry begins with a silence (Psathas,

1973), which is an attempt to grasp what is being studied. Therefore, phenomenologists emphasize the subjective aspects of people's behaviour. They attempt to gain entry into the conceptual world of their subjects (Geertz, 1973) to understand what meaning they construct around events in their daily lives and how they do so. Phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to all of us through our interactions with others and that the meaning of our experiences constitutes reality (Greene, 1978). Reality, consequently, is "socially constructed" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

All qualitative researchers share, to some degree, the goal of understanding their subjects from their own points of view:

> Point of view is a research construct. Researchers believe that looking at subjects in terms of this idea may force subjects' experience of the world into a mode that is foreign to them. This intrusion, however, is inevitable in research. Researchers intruding in this way are inevitable because researchers make interpretations and require some conceptual scheme to do this. Qualitative researchers believe that approaching people with a goal of trying to understand their point of view, while not perfect, distorts the subjects' experience the least. It is essential that researchers involved in qualitative analysis be self-conscious in regard to this theoretical and methodological issue. Thus, reality comes to be understood to human beings only in the form in which it is perceived. Qualitative researchers emphasize subjective thinking because, as they see it, objects less obstinate than walls dominate the world. And human beings are much more like *The Little Engine that Could*. We live in our imaginations, settings more symbolic than concrete. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 35)

Symbolic Interaction

Mead's (1934) *Mind, Self, and Society* is the most cited early source of what is now called symbolic interaction. Compatible with the phenomenological perspective and basic to the approach is the assumption that human experiences are mediated by interpretation (Blumer, 1969). Objects, people, situations, and events do not possess their own meaning; rather, meaning is conferred on them. Through interaction, individuals

construct meaning. Interpretation is not an autonomous action, but it is an essential action. Symbolic interaction becomes the conceptual paradigm, rather than internal drives, personality traits, unconscious motives, needs, socioeconomic status, role obligations, cultural prescriptions, social-control mechanisms, or the physical environment (Blumer, as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 36).

The Qualitative Researcher

Merriam (1998) discusses the question of what constitutes a qualitative researcher. In keeping with Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Merriam states that in a qualitative study the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing the data collected in the field. Merriam goes on to say that the researcher has the opportunity to maximize opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information and, conversely, the opportunity to miss the opportunities presented to him or her. Because the researcher is human, Merriam states, "mistakes can be made, opportunities missed, and personal biases can interfere with the research gathering and analysis. Human instruments are as fallible as any other research instrument" (p. 20).

The qualitative researcher must have a tolerance for ambiguity. Sensitivity or being highly intuitive is another required trait. The notion of sensitivity pervades the literature on qualitative research. Merriam (1998) notes, as do Guba and Lincoln (1981), that qualitative evaluators do not measure. Rather, "they do what anthropologists, social scientists, connoisseurs, critics, oral historians, novelists, essayists and poets throughout the years have done. They emphasize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke images, and create, for the reader or listener, the sense of having been there" (Merriam, 1998, p. 149).

The qualitative researcher must be a good communicator. A good communicator empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently. Merriam (1998, p. 140) quotes Guba and Lincoln (1981): "One of the hallmarks of outstanding anthropological and sociological studies to date has been the empathy with which they have presented major actors, performers, and informants. . . . . The extent to which inquirers are able to communicate warmth and empathy often marks them as good or not-so-good data collectors." Another vital communication skill is listening, which involves more than oral skills. Qualitative researchers must also be able to write. Qualitative researchers are, above all, human beings who attend carefully to the social and behavioural signals of others and who find others intrinsically interesting.

Merriam (1998) asserts that, in producing a qualitative study, the researcher must be sensitive to the biases inherent in this type of research. "Qualitative research is distinguished partly by its admission of the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame" (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 92). The primary instrument of qualitative research is human, and all the data gathered through methods such as observation are filtered through the researcher's worldview, values, and perspectives. Merriam reminds readers that "the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research are that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality. The researcher thus brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 23).

Qualitative Case-Study Research

Two writers who have made significant contributions to the literature on qualitative case-study research are Merriam and Stake. Merriam (1998, p. 27) states that the single most defining characteristic of qualitative case-study research is the ability to delimit the object of study, the case. Stake (1995, p. 2) adds that "the case is an integrated system." Merriam (1998) writes,

> Both definitions allow me to see the case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can "fence in" what I am going to study. The case then could be a person such as a student, a teacher, a principal; a program; a group such as a class, a school, a community; a specific policy; and so on. (p. 27)

Merriam (1998) states that qualitative researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation, rather than hypothesis testing. She provides specific definitions of the special features of case-study research. She defines *particularistic* as a focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. *Descriptive* is defined as the end product of a case study as a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. *Thick description* is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated. She defines *heuristic* as meaning that case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study; they can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known.

Merriam (1998) further states that definitions of *case study* often centre on delineating what is unique about the design of case-study research. According to her, the uniqueness of a case study lies not so much in the methods employed (although they are important) as in the questions asked and in their relationship to the end product. Merriam

builds on Stake in discussing this in terms of *case study knowledge:*

> Case study knowledge is more concrete; case study knowledge resonates with our own experience because it is more vivid, concrete, and sensory than abstract. It is more contextual; our experiences are rooted in context, as is knowledge in case studies. This knowledge is distinguishable from the abstract, formal knowledge derived from other research designs. Case study is more developed by reader interpretation. Readers bring to a case study their own experience and understanding, which lead to generalizations when new data for the case are added to old data. Finally, it is based more on reference populations determined by the reader—in generalizing as described above, readers have some population in mind. Thus, unlike traditional research, the reader participates in extending generalization to reference populations. (Merriam, 1998, pp. 35–36)

Case-study research has its limitations. Although case study can provide detailed description and analysis, a researcher may not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 377) point out that "case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs." A qualitative case study can also be limited by the need for sensitivity and integrity in the researcher. A further concern about case-study research has to do with ethics, specifically the ethical concerns arising from bias. Clearly related to this issue of bias is the inherently political nature of case-study research (Merriam, 1998).

Mishler (1986) views interviewing as a central research method in the social sciences. He explains the complexities of interviewing:

> Essentially the mainstream tradition has focused almost exclusively on problems of standardization, that is, on how to ask all respondents the same question and how to analyze the responses with standardized coding systems. This line of inquiry has been accompanied by almost total neglect of the intertwined problems of language, meaning and context—problems that are critical to understanding how interviews work. (p. 233)

Interviews are looked at as discourse between speakers, with these problems brought forward as central topics for interview research. The respondent's answers are treated as stories or narratives by applying the methods of narrative analysis. This brings

to mind a parallel found in literary theories that incorporate contemporary criticism by showing how various cultural theories work in practice. Some of the categories in literary analysis are new criticism, phenomenological criticism, archetypal and genre criticism, structuralist-semiotic criticism, sociological criticism, reader response criticism, deconstructionist criticism, humanist criticism, and psychoanalytic criticism. The links between language, meaning, and context problems found in interview narratives have strong parallels with concerns in literature analysis. Mishler (1986) uses core narratives or plot outlines in analyzing interviews. He views this reduction of the narrative as a suggestive and powerful analytic tool that offers, for example, guidelines for comparative analysis of collections of narratives from many respondents.

Mishler (1986, p. 249) points out an essential consideration for researchers involved in interviewing: "If we wish to hear respondents' stories, then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about." Carson (1986) states that establishing a conversational relation is a hermeneutic endeavour. This view is rooted in Gadamer's (1975) philosophical hermeneutics, which considers interpretive acts in their widest possible sense as the ontological task of understanding the nature of human being-in-the-world. About curriculum, Carson writes,

> When it is applied to curriculum research, philosophical hermeneutics allows us to understand that curriculum theorists and inquirers do not begin their thinking and research from scratch. Persons interested in such issues partake in a continuing and evolving conversation on curriculum theory and classroom practice which has begun long before their arrival and which now continues with their participation. (p. 84)

To use conversation as a means of research means to understand and commit oneself to a communal adventure—an adventure focused on discovering the "right"

relationship with children, with one another, and with the wider community. This kind of research requires self-conscious realization and has the potential to elicit responses or a kind of communication not possible in the traditional interview. Conversation, then, is more collegial and, in being so, may produce a richer dialogue for the researcher. "Fundamentally, conversational research . . . makes possible a deeper understanding of the reality of our situations as educators. . . . By engaging in conversation, researchers are helping to create spaces within educational institutions for thoughtful reflection oriented towards improving practice" (Carson, 1986, p. 84).

Analyzing, Reporting, and Evaluating the Research

Morse (1994) believes that theory development is where the real contribution of qualitative research lies, although there are many challenges faced by qualitative researchers. One challenge is the need to make explicit the cognitive struggle present in model or theory construction.

> Data analysis is a process that requires astute questioning, a relentless search for answers, active observations, and accurate recall. It is a process of piecing together data, of making the invisible obvious, of recognizing the significant from the insignificant, of linking seemingly unrelated facts logically, of fitting categories one with another, and of attributing consequences to antecedents. It is a process of conjecture and verification, of correction and modification, of suggestion and defense. It is a creative process of organizing data so that the analytic scheme will appear obvious. (Morse, 1994, p. 25)

Morse (1994) identifies four cognitive processes that appear to be integral to all qualitative methods: comprehending, synthesizing, theorizing, and recontextualizing.

Outcomes of Qualitative Research

Ellis (1998) and Packer and Addison (1989) suggest three possible outcomes of an interpretive inquiry:

- Ideas for helpful action are identified.
- New questions or concerns come to the researcher's attention.
- The researcher is changed by the research—that is, the researcher discovers inadequacies in his or her own initial pre-understandings.

To judge whether an answer has been uncovered by an interpretive account, Ellis (1998) advances six questions to direct attention to the considerations qualitative researchers value:

- Is it plausible, convincing?
- Does it fit with other material we know?
- Does it have the power to change practice?
- Has the researcher's understanding been transformed?
- Has a solution been uncovered?
- Have new possibilities been opened up for the researcher, research participants and the structure of the context? (pp. 30-31)

Analysis and Interpretation in This Study

Framework

Leadership literature provided the focus for examining and understanding the practices, actions, and influence of the secondary subject department head in creating the conditions for curriculum implementation in an urban secondary English department in Alberta, a province in which all school districts work within the parameters of school-based management.

Philosophical Stance

This study was carried out using a qualitative, descriptive case-study paradigm (Merriam, 1998). Some philosophical assumptions guide the use of the qualitative-research paradigm. These philosophical assumptions are predicated on the researcher's views on multiple realities, an interest in description, and the influence of the researcher on the researched.

An assumption of the interpretive research stance is the existence of multiple realities. Qualitative research, which encompasses the interpretive stance, assumes that

> There are multiple realities—the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. In this paradigm there are no pre-determined hypotheses; no treatment and no restrictions on the end product. One does not manipulate variables or administer a treatment. What one does is observe, intuit, sense what is occurring in a natural setting—hence the term naturalistic inquiry. (Merriam, 1998, p. 17)

I worked from the assumption that there would be multiple realities and understandings held by all the participants in this study and that these would help me provide a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied. By interacting with the department heads, their supervisors, and their staffs through the interviewing process, I was able to describe the department head's role as a curriculum-change agent or curriculum leader through the lenses of the department heads and the participants/informants who supported and carried out the implementation of the newest program of studies. My goal was to understand the role of the department head as a curriculum leader through the descriptions of the varied and multiple realities of the department heads, their supervisors, and their staffs. I assumed that I would hear different

descriptions of the role of the department heads, which I did, and I have included them all in this study.

Interest in description.

The primary objective in using a descriptive paradigm is to present a detailed account of the phenomenon under study. Merriam (1988, p. 39) defines *descriptive case study,* writing, "They are useful, though, in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted. Innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education." I sought to describe the role of the department heads and their perspectives, practices, initiatives, and actions as curriculum leaders working as curriculum-change agents.

The interviews with the department heads, with their immediate supervisors, and with the staff members they selected were the sources of the description of the department heads' role as curriculum-change agents in the implementation of Alberta's newest English language arts program of studies (Alberta Learning, 2003). The time I spent in the participants' schools in contact with them on their home ground added to the detailed description of the phenomenon under study.

It is essential to emphasize that the detailed description presented in this study does not focus on the personal details of the department heads, the other participants, or their schools. Presenting those details would have jeopardized the anonymity of the participants, a given in the undertaking of this research.

Influence of the researcher on the researched.

My understanding of the interplay between the interviewer and the interviewee in administering semi-structured interviews clarified in my mind the fact that I would have

an influence on the participants or the interviews. Owens (1982, p. 6) states, "It is illusionary to suppose that the interaction between the inquirer and subject may be eliminated. This dynamic relationship can make it practicable for the inquirer, himself or herself, to become the data-gathering and processing 'transducer.'"

I had positive, respectful, trusting, collegial relationships with the department heads and several of the staff members who participated prior to the initiation of this study. Many of these relationships had come out of my work in the Alberta language arts community. I believe that this allowed all the participants to open up to me and to be honest and candid, and it helped me to develop a lens that allowed data gathering that would otherwise not have been visible to me. I tried to be respectful of and sensitive to the context of the home ground of the participants and to be flexible, inquisitive, and inclusive in my approach to data gathering. I was deliberate in my attempts to be open to the nonverbal context of the department heads' work. I took every opportunity to clarify and summarize as the study evolved. This was particularly important as I made sense of the contradictions and anomalies present in the participant responses.

Familiarity With the Phenomenon

In a qualitative case study, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 149) differentiate the human researcher from other data-collection instruments. "They emphasize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke images, and create, for the reader or the listener, the sense of having been there." This necessitates becoming intimately familiar with the phenomenon being studied.

Through my work of nearly a decade as a curriculum leader in the role of a secondary English department head, I acquired an intimate familiarity with the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent. I could relate to all of what the participants shared with me in the interviews, and I felt empathy for the department heads and their staffs as they worked together to implement the newest English language arts program of studies. Although I realize that the data collected provide only a snapshot of the curriculum leadership under way in both departments, I was able to form a clearly focused picture of the work undertaken by the department heads in their roles as curriculum-change agents. The department heads provided me with opportunities to learn more about a specific task of the curriculum leader in a secondary subject department.

Selection of the Participants

The cases in this study are two secondary English department heads working in large urban high schools. Chein (1981) and Patton (1990) postulate that the most appropriate means of selecting a case is purposeful sampling. Through this method, the researcher selects information-rich cases for in-depth study. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) use the term *criterion-based selection.* In criterion-based selection, the researcher creates a list of attributes that are essential and critical to the study and then proceeds to find cases that match the criteria.

The department heads were considered by their principals and other department heads to be effective curriculum leaders in their departments and schools. They each had at least three years of experience in the role of English department head in a large urban high school. I believe that it was necessary for the department heads to have had some time to work with the teachers in their departments as curriculum-change agents in the

implementation of the newest program of studies before this work could be described and specific examples could be provided. Less than three years in the role of department head would not have been enough time to accomplish this. The data for the Irma High School case study was collected before the newest English language arts program of studies became mandatory in Alberta, and the data for the Holden High School case study was collected during the first year of mandatory implementation.

The two department heads were reflective practitioners, capable of and willing to carefully and clearly articulate their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Both had given freely of their time throughout their careers to contribute to their districts' language arts communities. As well, their schools were known, as were their principals, for viewing curriculum leadership as the primary focus of the school and its departments. I had known both department heads as teaching and department head colleagues and was certain that the professional relationships we had developed over the years would allow for open, honest, explicit conversations related to the interview questions presented.

I also interviewed the department heads' immediate supervisors and teachers from the departments. The department heads' immediate supervisors had been assigned by the principal, and the department heads themselves selected participants from the members of their departments who had volunteered to participate.

Data Gathering

Because I had selected a qualitative approach for my study, I used the data-gathering strategy of semi-structured interviews, which were triangulated by having all the case-study participants—the department heads, their immediate supervisors, and the department staff members—participate. As well, document analyses, informal

conversations, and observations recorded in my field notes were employed in gathering the data. The interviews in each school were conducted over a six-week period, with three years between the first school and the second. All the interviews were conducted in the schools, with the exception of one, which was conducted for the convenience of the teacher participant in her home.

The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the role of the department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest high school English language arts program of studies. I used questionnaires, semi-structured interview instruments, and semi-structured interviews as the primary means of gathering the data. I conducted interviews with three former senior education leaders about school-based management and curriculum leadership. The questionnaires and the protocol for the semi-structured interviews were adapted from Henderson (1993), who modified those used by Miles (1984), Beaton (1985), and Strudler (1987). Informants included the department heads, their supervisors (assistant principals), and two teachers in the Irma case study and three in the Holden case study.

As in Henderson's (1993) study, two similar forms of these questionnaires (Appendixes D–I) were used. One questionnaire was completed by the department heads to establish their personal profiles. The other questionnaire, identical except for the paragraph of introduction, was used to obtain information on the department heads from specific informants (supervisors and teachers). As in Henderson's study, department heads, supervisors, and teachers completed the questionnaire prior to their interviews. The responses from the questionnaires were used to construct a profile of each department head. Each informant ranked the priorities, strategies, skills, and outcomes

according to his or her perceptions of the department head and the curriculum-change process. Identical methodologies were employed in both case studies.

Four interviews at Irma High School and five interviews at Holden High School were scheduled. The interviews with the supervisors (Appendixes E and F) were designed to bring forward the history and policy surrounding the role of the department heads in their schools. Questions about how department heads develop their curriculum-leadership skills were included. Each department head first filled out a questionnaire on the strategies and skills she used in her role as a curriculum-change agent, and then participated in a taped interview that probed for specific incidents in which she had served as a curriculum leader during the periods prior to and during the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies.

In these interviews, I asked the department heads which strategies and skills they usually used to implement the newest curriculum and teaching strategies. Each interview took about one hour to complete. I used my background as an English department head to probe for specific details.

I interviewed each teacher once. I asked them to explain their contributions to the implementation of the newest program of studies. They were also asked about the strategies and skills used by their department heads, and I asked them to describe specific incidents in which the department head had been particularly helpful. As well, the teachers were requested to comment on the outcomes of the work of the department heads as curriculum-change agents and to identify the skills employed by the department heads in achieving them.

I made use of the notion of the forward and backward arc (Packer & Addison, 1989) to make initial sense of the data gathered. In the forward arc, I used my forestructure—my preconceptions, pre-understandings, and prejudices—to interpret the initial interpretation and attempted to see what had gone unseen before. In this process, I sought to determine both what was present in and what was absent from the data.

I requested that each department head's supervisor provide me with a profile of the school. This was described in the form of the school plan. I also asked each department head to provide me with the department handbook, course descriptions, teaching units, descriptions of professional development activities, and examples of assessment tools and rubrics. When available, these helped to support and inform the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Achievement results were not available because the study was concluded before the provincial diploma exams for the newest curriculum were introduced.

I wrote my field notes in a black hardcover journal. The notes were a smorgasbord of materials related to the participants, their schools, the data gathered from the participants, questions that arose, personal reflections, excerpts from readings germane to the study, and questions and quotations from meetings with my supervisor. As well, I outlined the section of my draft documents I was working on, and I wrote out the next day's to-do list. These notes contained whatever information, thoughts, feelings, or experiences I wanted a record of to further inform my study. This text was part of my data gathering and supported the analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

When I returned from administering the questionnaire and conducting the interviews, I would write in my journal, including whatever I felt was central to what had happened when I was interacting with the participants. I listened to the tapes, reviewed the notes I had made during the interviews, and examined and stored the documents and artifacts collected. I then made a to-do list of the points that required follow-up.

When all the tapes for a section of the study had been completed, I sent them out for transcription. All the senior leadership participant tapes were processed together, as were the case-study participant tapes. The person I entrusted with the job of transcribing the tapes was efficient and accurate, and she understood the need for confidentiality—a need that was emphasized to everyone who had access to the data during the data-analysis process. Because I wanted to ensure the safe storage of the data in more than one form and location, the transcriptionist provided me with transcriptions both in print and on a computer disk, and a copy of the disk was stored in the safe at my husband's accounting practice.

I read the transcriptions at my dining-room table, with my field notes and school documents at hand for reference and review. The first and second reads were done without a pen in hand, the third with a highlighter pen for underlining, and the subsequent readings included making notes in the margins. Then, I listened to the tapes and repeated the process again. This allowed me to begin the coding process. Coding was done using the categories adopted from the change-agent strategies and outcomes found in Henderson (1993) and influenced by the work of Stevenson (1995).

The ongoing intensive review of all the sources of data allowed me to develop a deep understanding of the detailed data I had collected. The data was categorized into seven distinct categories:

- Descriptions of Irma High School and Holden High School
- Participating department heads' profiles
- A day in the life of Sharon, English department head at Holden High School
- The roles and responsibilities of the secondary English department heads, as perceived by teacher participants, the department heads' immediate supervisors, and the department heads themselves
- Qualifications for the role of department head
- Attitudes toward implementation of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies
- The role of the department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies

Implications for Educational Practice and Future Research

Further reflection helped me to identify the overarching categories, which helped to provide a detailed description of the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent. The research design for this study was descriptive. It was an outgrowth of the doctoral study done by Henderson (1993) on the role of the high school department head as a change agent in implementing a new social studies curriculum. My study differs from Henderson's in the following ways:

- My study was conducted in larger urban decentralized school districts.

- My study involved two department heads. My goal was to examine the strategies and skills of two department heads who serve as change agents, not to compare their degrees of effectiveness.
- In my study, the demographic differences between the case-study participants were analyzed not to determine if the differences created more or less effective change agents but, rather, to determine if the demographics of the two department heads helped to determine the skills and strategies used by each in the role of change agent.
- Henderson (1993) relied exclusively on the data collected from the survey instrument. I used the survey data as well as data collected from a semi-structured interview instrument. As a former English department head, I understood the situational context in which the semi-structured interview instrument was administered. Having fewer participants decreased the breadth of data to be analyzed, and my experience in the situation improved the depth of the data analysis. This, coupled with identifying the findings supported in both survey and interview data, made the analysis and reporting of data more reliable.
- Information was gathered to ascertain the contribution made by a large decentralized school district to the role of the department head as a change agent. This provided information on the organizational structure of the districts in which the department heads worked and its impact on their role as change agents.

Trustworthiness of the Findings

Validity, dependability, and ethics are crucial aspects of all research paradigms.

Internal validity.

Internal validity in all research, including case-study research, relies on the meaning of reality. Merriam (1998) states that, in case-study research,

> Internal validity deals with the question of how the research findings match reality. How congruent are the findings with reality? Do the findings capture what was really there? Are investigators observing or measuring what they think they are measuring? (p. 201)

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) identify four factors that increase the validity of ethnographic and case-study research: (1) living among the participants and collecting data for long periods, (2) informant interviews, (3) participant observation, and (4) researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring. All these factors were present in my study in varying degrees. In my study, two periods of six weeks were used for data collection. Informant interviews were conducted and informal participant observation occurred, as did researcher reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring.

I spent the most time with the department heads—as much time as they had available—and I was confident that I had a good understanding of their perceptions, their actions, and the outcomes of their work as curriculum-change agents. The data gathered from the department heads was congruent with and validated by the data gathered from the other participant informants (their immediate supervisors and the teachers). Through this triangulation of the data, I determined that I had gathered trustworthy data.

The department heads, their immediate supervisors, and teachers from their departments informed my research in the schools. I engaged all three groups in informal conversations and conducted the semi-structured interviews, which were captured on tape

or in my field notes. The taped conversations were transcribed and, along with my field notes, were the bases of the detailed description of the department head's role as a curriculum-change agent.

I spent an extended intermittent period of time over six weeks in the school setting recording the work of each department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest program of studies. I engaged in informal conversations and conversations shaped by the semi-structured interviews with all the study's participants. As well, I collected various documents when available to support the participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews. I endeavoured to provide a detailed description of the role of the department heads as curriculum-change agents in the implementation of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies through the lenses of those who experienced it.

As a researcher, at every stage in this study, I engaged in ongoing reflection and introspection. These are habits and ways of being that I have used in my role as a teacher, consultant, and department head and continue to use as an International Baccalaureate program coordinator. Reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring are integral aspects of my person, and I was able to seamlessly apply these tendencies in this study.

External validity.

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. It was not the intent of this study that the findings be applicable to other situations; however, it is my hope that those who read this study will gain insights into the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent to enhance the implementation of the newest program of study in a secondary subject

department. My perspective on external validity is supported by Firestone's (1993) "case-to-case transfer" view of external validity, in which it is the reader who determines what in a study fits his or her situation. The sufficient detailed description provided in this study will make that possible.

Dependability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the term *dependability* is a more fitting term for qualitative research than *reliability*. They maintain that "rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable" (p. 288). Merriam (1998) states that, in qualitative case studies, the question is not whether findings will be found again but, rather, whether the results are consistent with the data collected.

I am confident that, in my work as a qualitative researcher, I have presented my data and findings such that readers will find them consistent and dependable. I have created and left an audit trail of my field notes, my personal reflections, the questionnaires, the semi-structured interview tapes and their transcriptions, and a variety of other documents used in the study. I have explicitly described the research methodology so that those who wish to replicate the study will be able to do so.

Ethics.

Before beginning the study, I obtained permission to carry it out from the school districts and I obtained informed consent in writing from the participants. The participants were informed of the 100% voluntary nature of their involvement and of

their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All the participants were open and willing to contribute to the study.

Confidentiality and the anonymity of all participants have been maintained during and following the study. Pseudonyms have been used for the participants and their schools.

The participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews and to clarify their comments. They were encouraged to amend the transcripts and comments, and together we were able to negotiate the interpretation of the data to ensure its fidelity. The participants were provided with a draft of the findings used to write the case studies. Information of a sensitive nature was discussed with participants when necessary prior to inclusion in the study.

A possible ethical dilemma is that the department heads in this study are both well-known educators in the cities and school districts in which the research was carried out. Through my sharing the details collected from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, as well as the descriptions of the schools, there was the potential that the participants would be identified. I have conscientiously provided the information in such a way that anonymity and confidentiality of all participants have been protected.

Summation

The preceding review of the literature on qualitative research provided the required framework for conducting this study. This framework included the following:

- Background to qualitative literature
- Theoretical underpinnings of qualitative research
- The characteristics of a qualitative researcher

- A definition of *case-study research*
- How qualitative research is analyzed, reported, and evaluated
- The possible outcomes of qualitative research

This framework shaped and guided the methodology selected for the analysis and interpretation. The literature review in the next chapter focuses on literature related to the role of the secondary subject department head. In doing so, it combines an interdisciplinary body of research literature focused on the role of the department head as a curriculum leader.

CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review contains three sections related to the role of the secondary subject department head. The first section provides the historical development of the role and presents some of the issues affecting what can be accomplished by those who hold the position. The second section situates the position within postmodern leadership literature. The third section reviews the literature on curriculum leadership and provides a picture of what the department head's role is becoming or ought to become.

This literature review is significant in that it is one of few studies that bring together literature on the roles and responsibilities of the traditional secondary department head, the postmodern environment in which department heads work, and the leadership roles available to them in their role as curriculum leaders. This review frames the English subject department head as a curriculum leader rather than a traditional bureaucratic, post–Second World War middle manager.

Historical Development of the Role of the Department Head

Background

Research over the past two decades has resulted in a considerable body of knowledge about who and what have made a difference in the change process. The characteristics of people who facilitate change have been identified through research. There is, however, much less knowledge about how change agents acquire these characteristics and use them to implement change in schools. This study focuses on one type of change agent—the secondary department head serving as a curriculum leader—

and the strategies and skills department heads use in implementing the newest program of studies.

Role of the Department Head

The literature about the department head, in this section of the literature review, provides a picture of the department head working in a bureaucratic, organizational structure. Subsequent literature about the department head, in this study, shifts to a discussion of the department head as a curriculum leader.

Secondary schools adopted the department model from industry after World War I. A department head became a member of a high school teaching staff who taught within a department such as mathematics, science, or English and was assigned responsibilities for administrative tasks by the school's principal (Sergiovanni, 1984).

Thomas (1965) put forward one of the earliest and clearest rationales for the position of the subject department head in a high school:

> As high schools grew in size and complexity, it was soon evident that the principal was no longer able to carry out all the original responsibilities of his position. The assistance needed by the principal and greater attention to subject matter areas soon produced the departmental organization with department heads as the dominant organizational structure for the secondary school. (p. 49)

A memo on the role of the department head, which the Edmonton Public School Board sent in 1997 to its principals, stresses the necessity of having department heads engaged in the improvement of instruction:

> Just as the office of assistant principal was created to assist the principal in his administration of large schools, so the office of department head has now been created to assist and direct groups of teachers in their professional growth and in their work toward the constant upgrading of pupil achievement in specific subject areas.

This statement suggests that high school department heads have a role to play in working

with department teachers to improve student achievement by improving instruction in their departments. However, very little (if any) research on the role and the needs of department heads has been undertaken in the United States and Canada (Henderson, 1993).

Although principals have delegated selected responsibilities to their department heads, the roles and responsibilities associated with the position have remained ambiguous. Hord and Murphy (1985) make the following observation:

> The most appropriate characterization of the department head role is its inconsistency in the way it is operationalized across heads within a school, with a district, and across all the districts we have studied. We have found great variability. (p. 8)

Marcial (1984) found that central office personnel, principals, and department heads viewed the role of department head as a line administrative position, whereas teachers viewed it as a teaching or staff position lacking in supervisory authority.

As well, the methods of selecting department heads have not always been effective. The existence of this situation in Alberta is supported by a monograph published by the Alberta Teachers' Association (1969):

> It was felt that it [the department head position] would be a way of recognizing some of those senior high school teachers who were desirous of an administrative or quasi-administrative position but who found that the openings for such in the senior high schools are extremely limited. (p. 1)

Simpson (1992) found that there exists a lack of both selection criteria and training for teachers who become department heads. She writes, "A majority of participants had less than eight years of experience in their present school. Less than half of the department heads held any type of degree in education beyond the bachelor level" (p. 65). She also observes that "the majority of department heads had not had any special

training related to their position" (p. 65). Turner (1983) also recognizes this problem and advocates for training for department heads. He believes that "too few department heads are skilled in executing leadership functions with fellow professionals. Most come directly from the classroom with much more experience working with adolescents" (p. 26).

Henderson (1993) emphasizes that what was true about the role of the department head in the '60s, '70s, and '80s is still true today. There is confusion about the role. Different perceptions of the role are held by leadership staff and teachers, there is a lack of selection criteria and training for the position, and department heads lack the ability to clearly articulate their own roles.

Duties of the Department Head

The literature on the department head's job description and related duties suggests that there is a need for a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of the department head. This is supported in the work of Callahan (1971), Leithwood and McLean (1987) and Sergiovanni (1984). Sergiovanni suggests that department heads should be used less for passing on administrative decisions and more as instructional leaders or, as defined in this study, curriculum leaders.

Potential Influence of Department Heads in the Change Process

Turner (1983) suggests that the department head in a high school must take on a different role to become part of the change process undertaken in a school:

> The department head is a relatively untapped source of badly needed help for our embattled schools. In a period of painful retrenchment, of shrinking resources, and of mounting pressures to improve quality, administrators should seek to use

their department heads more effectively. (p. 25)

Sergiovanni (1984) supports Turner's view. He believes that department heads must be used more effectively and that, instead of acting as "change facilitators," they have the potential to serve as "change agents." Henderson (1993) states that department heads are well situated in schools to serve as change agents when high degrees of homophily, communication proximity, and credibility as a change agent are present. These factors influence the "information exchange potential" present between a department head and department teachers. Henderson's views are predicated on Rogers's (1983) definitions of *homophily* and *communication proximity. Homophily* is defined as the degree to which individuals who interact are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, education, social status, and the like. *Communication proximity* refers to the "degree to which two linked individuals in a network have personal communication networks that overlap" (p. 274). Rogers (1995) also believes that communication proximity leads to a high rate of adoption and implementation of an innovation. Rogers (1983, p. 274) defines *credibility* as "the degree to which clients perceive the change agent as knowledgeable, expert, and trustworthy." If these qualities are present in a department head, given his or her work location in a subject department in a high school, the department head is well situated to serve as a curriculum-change agent. Studies by Emrick, Peterson, and Agarwala-Rogers (1977); Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor (1981); Rogers (1983); and Sieber, Louis, and Metzger (1972) are cited in Henderson (1993) as studies that agree with the importance of in-person assistance with a proven practice.

Limitations of the Department Head Role

The findings in the preceding section on the factors that have influenced the

ability of department heads to realize their potential as curriculum-change agents highlight that department heads are well positioned in schools to support the change process. However, a change process can be complex and labour-intensive, making it difficult for department heads, given their working conditions, to serve as curriculum-change agents. Department heads face heavy workloads and time constraints. Sergiovanni (1984) developed a list of the possible duties of a teacher serving as a department head, including the following:

- Taking inventory, making out requisitions, filing purchase orders, and approving invoices
- Presenting budget requests, attending leadership meetings with the principal, handing in a year-end departmental report, sitting on negotiation committees, and presenting oral reports at board of education meetings
- Participating in opening-of-school activities, attending parental conferences, and attending open-house activities in a leadership role
- Interviewing prospective teachers and helping prepare orientation booklets
- Evaluating teachers, reviewing lesson plans, ensuring that teachers turn in report card grades, consulting with teachers on disciplinary cases, and serving as a representative on grievances filed
- Approving professional development requests, approving teachers for summer school, sitting on in-service institute committees, and participating in activities sponsored by the provincial teachers' association
- Selecting textbooks, ordering professional journals in the subject area, informing the librarian of books and periodicals needed for resource

materials, and developing a procedure for the use of audiovisual equipment in the department

- Designing a system for accounting for the keys to special lab desks, filing cabinets, and equipment in the department
- Recommending curriculum revisions and coordinating with other department heads in the district

Lucy (1986) asked 130 department heads to estimate the time they spent on 10 different tasks, such as teaching, administrative, and clerical tasks. He found that administrative duties—such as collecting and organizing resources, completing forms, and passing on administrative information—consumed 83% of the department heads' time, leaving only 17% of their time for serving as curriculum leaders and change agents in their departments. This, according to Henderson (1993), supports Sergiovanni's (1984) belief that department heads spend too much time on routine administrative tasks.

Another limitation is the amount of release time department heads are given to fulfill their department head responsibilities. Sergiovanni (1984) found that most department heads received release time of one period per day. Lucy (1986) found that 60% of department heads taught two or more classes, with some teaching as many as five. Lucy also found that the more department heads taught, the less they worked as curriculum leaders with their department members. Lucy goes so far as to suggest that department heads should teach less, perhaps only one class, and assume primary responsibility for curriculum leadership in their departments.

If department heads are to function as curriculum leaders, they require the right personality, leadership ability, communication skills, and the ability to teach and conduct

staff development (Simpson, 1992). These qualities are listed in detail by Phipson and Boyne-Jardine (1981) and include the following:

- Contact with non-teaching staff
- Optimism/enthusiasm
- Realism
- Appearance
- Approachability/communication—staff/pupils/parents
- Organizer/leader
- Ability to delegate
- Democratic/good listener
- Good teacher
- Innovator
- Credibility/expertise in field
- Energetic/dynamic/hardworking
- Up-to-date/current issues
- Supportive/staff development
- Ability to spot strengths/weaknesses
- Sense of humor
- Consistency/fair
- Crisis manager
- Positive (pro-active), not merely reactive

Given the current working conditions of department heads, it is very difficult for them to serve as curriculum leaders or curriculum-change agents in their departments. A defined roles and responsibilities statement, the proper selection and training of department heads, and a smaller teaching load have been put forward as necessary changes to support the work of the department head as a curriculum leader and change agent within the department.

Curriculum Leadership in the Postmodern Secondary School

This section of the literature review focuses on curriculum leadership in postmodern secondary schools. The recapitulation of existing ideas is highly selective because of the large number of articles to choose from and, at the same time, highly inclusive in the areas of the review where few articles are available. Articles most

germane to the focus of the study have been included. This section first provides insight into the type of leadership required in postmodern secondary schools. Then, it looks at the environment created and practices undertaken by curriculum leaders in effective postmodern secondary schools. Finally, it looks at the possible contributions of curriculum leaders other than principals, such as subject department heads, in creating effective postmodern secondary schools. A curriculum leader, as defined in Chapter 1 for the purpose of this study, is an educational leader, such as a secondary subject department head, who works with teachers to develop, interpret, implement, assess, and revise curriculum to improve student achievement. A curriculum leader can engage in any of these processes as required to improve student achievement in the district, the school, the department, and, most important, the classroom. The review includes both theoretical and empirical literature.

Mitchell, Sackney, and Walker (1996) explore the concept of postmodernism as applied to the world of school organizations and educational leadership. In their introduction, the authors state their belief that "since postmodernism addresses the context and the content of authority within shifting economic, cultural, and political environments . . . the postmodern phenomenon may, indeed, be of interest and use to school personnel" (p. 39). They discovered that there is little writing on this topic to draw upon, so they felt like "early explorers wandering about in uncharted lands" (p. 48). Postmodernism, in their minds, has the potential to provide powerful images, metaphors, and ways of thinking that lead us to reconsider the issues that trouble our organizations, such as order and chaos, control and autonomy, structure and process, information and participation, and planning and sense-making. Today, our organizations are no longer

"hermetically sealed." Therefore, because of the technological society we live in and its reliance on information and innovation, we cope with a social reality in which disorder, instability, diversity, disequilibrium, nonlinear relations, and temporality have become the norm. In response, new models of organization are emerging. This leaves views of power, structure, efficacy, time, and change open to question.

Postmodernism also calls into question the concepts of careerism and permanence while calling on organizations to place greater emphasis on empowerment and discourse. This form of organization weakens the boundaries of organizations. In doing so, it requires organizations to have a core purpose or mission to provide the continuity and focus previously provided by its external structure (Mitchell, Sackney, & Walker, 1996). Postmodern organizations are learning organizations. In learning organizations, people engage in collective learning, using the skills of reflection and inquiry. Such organizations are more likely to survive in a world filled with unpredictability and change.

The postmodern era suggests that organizations be thought of in terms of processes and relationships rather than structures and rules (Mitchell, Sackney, & Walker, 1996). This notion creates images of unpredictability and turbulence. Sergiovanni (1992) argues for a new metaphor for school organizations. He suggests building community into our schools stemming from a "community of mind" represented in shared values, clear conceptions, and common understandings of schooling and of human nature. The community-building enterprise establishes a foundation for organizational processes and relationships.

Leadership and power are different in a postmodern world. A different kind of leadership is required in postmodern organizations, which are flatter and more collaborative. The new leaders are people capable of mastering the unexpected and, often, the unwanted. Therefore, postmodern leaders need the ability to tolerate ambiguity and fragmentation. It is equally important for the postmodern leader to acknowledge and generally anticipate the occurrence and impact of vague events (Berquist, 1993). As well, Wexler (1990) argues that postmodern organizations rely on expertise rather than leadership positions for the primary basis of authority.

Many of the leadership styles currently being advocated reflect the challenges of a postmodern world. The postmodern world has a need for harmony and coherence in place of its disorder and complexity. This requires leaders to facilitate the development of meaning and the building of relationships between individuals and their social constructions. Other authors have penned leadership metaphors that capture this idea. For example, Bolman and Deal's (1991) idea of "symbolic leadership," Block's (1993) "stewardship," Sergiovanni's (1992) "moral leadership," Leithwood's (1992) "transformational leadership," and Cunningham and Gresso's (1993) "cultural leadership." The images presented in those articles point to a transformative leadership style for the postmodern organization.

Postmodern leaders and their followers must keep their personnel and institutional missions and purposes crystal clear while working in a turbulent environment. Leadership can come from anywhere in an organization, and empowerment, collaboration, and participation are the buzzwords of the day. Leaders are in power not because of their positions but because of the knowledge and expertise they bring to the positions.

However, school systems have appeared reluctant to make the changes necessary for survival in a postmodern world. Collaborative decision-making and problem-solving are viewed as key components of postmodern organizations, but schools still operate in a culture of individualism and incrementalism (Mitchell, Sackney, & Walker, 1996). In a postmodern world, change is rapid and complex, occurs in many segments simultaneously, and has uncertain outcomes. The restructuring movement in education has brought about little change. These results are not surprising, given that educators have continued to work within existing paradigms where new paradigms are required.

Decentralization is a key theme in the postmodern world. Bureaucratic notions of rules, hierarchies, predictability, and centralization are to be replaced with decentralizing, self-regulating, fluid, and flexible structures. School-based management, the self-managing school, networking, collaboration, and cultures of consent are all elements in a postmodern environment. The problems faced by today's schools are very complex—too complex for a single educator to solve. Inquiry, reflection, self-improvement, and organizational learning will help schools to flourish in a postmodern world. Vision-building is also essential to having a clear sense of the organization's purpose or mission. Mission enables educational leaders to evaluate different alternatives and perspectives within the boundaries provided by the mission statement and, in doing so, provides a solid basis for selection from a number of choices. Participation in the creation of an organization's mission makes it unnecessary to buy into someone else's vision. By participating in the process, educators can feel energized and empowered.

Conflict resolution in a postmodern world requires educators to recognize that differences, conflict, and tension are natural parts of a dynamic process. Learning and

resolution should replace defensiveness and sensitivity, allowing educators to deal with the sensitive issues faced in educational organizations as problems to be solved. This approach can be most useful when department heads work as curriculum-change agents, given that implementing new curriculum is a highly political and value-laden process.

Aligning Organizational Elements Within a Postmodern Context

Organization

Modern organizations typified by bureaucratized and mechanistic structures of control were erected upon a base of a divided and deskilled labour force (Mitchell, Sackney, & Walker, 1996). The key to the bureaucratic organization was the rational definition of offices; jobs were defined by the needs of the organization rather than by the people in them. This led to a fundamental problem of bureaucracy and segmentation, which resulted in a waste of human intelligence. Power in a bureaucratic organization was asymmetrical. Power rested at the top of the pyramid or organization. Those who achieved positions of power understandably worked to hold on to power, and all forms of legitimate authority were essentially structures of domination.

On the other hand, postmodernists view power as being unchecked. Language is seen as the central discursive constitution of power. Consequently, organizational sense-making relies more heavily on building relationships, meanings, and connections than on structures and rules (Sackney, Walker, & Mitchell, 1999). In postmodern organizations, characterized by "flexible specialization" and "post-Fordism" emphasis on intelligibility, organizational problems are confronted by transient "self-managing teams" based on knowledge and expertise, implying that power is based on knowledge and flexibility of forms (p. 44).

Leadership

The role of leaders shifts in postmodern organizations because knowledge, which is equated with power, can reside anywhere in the organization. Therefore, teamwork is a necessary component of the postmodern organization. Teamwork necessitates a shift in the way leaders work. Leaders need to tolerate and facilitate ambiguity, fragmentation, process, and visioning. Postmodern leaders can come from anywhere in the organization and are in charge because of their knowledge and expertise, not because of the positions they hold in the organization. Postmodern leaders should encourage two-way communication and the formation of networks. They should also help people to live with structural chaos and ambiguity, and assist the group in developing a sense of mission to guide its work. As well, they need to anticipate the occurrence of nebulous events and help the organization to become a professional learning community working to further the purpose or mission of the organization.

Implications of Postmodern Power for School Leadership

School leadership in postmodern organizations requires a fundamental shift in understanding of the concept of power. "The process of individual and group reflection, professional conversation, invitation and affirmation will help to deal with school issues, needs and concerns in ways that honor the social context in postmodern schools" (Sackney, Walker, & Mitchell, 1999, p. 47). However, before this way of leading can be actualized, the practices of school leaders must be harmonized with the postmodern world. For this to occur, change must occur in several areas.

Fragmentation

Modern school systems are bureaucratic. They are hierarchical, in that school subjects are separated from one another, students are grouped by grade levels, teachers teach in isolation, and parents are not always welcomed into the school. This sort of fragmentation is antithetical to the notions of connection and relationship inherent in the postmodern worldview. The strong sense of individualism and independence found in modern school organizations has worked against the development of collaborative cultures and leadership. Until educational leaders confront the norms of individualism and independence, transformational leadership and shared power in schools will not be realized.

Access to current research in educational matters is also important in supporting the changes required. Without sufficient pedagogic knowledge to improve teaching and learning conditions in schools, teachers and leaders simply reshape the same practices.

Ways of Leading

Postmodernity conjures up images of diversity, multiplicity, and possibility. In doing so, it suggests that one's assumptions, biases, and beliefs represent only one perspective on the world. Therefore, educational leaders, like others, must be continually thoughtful in their approaches. As well, they must confront their own frames of reference and encourage reflexivity and reflective practice among their teaching staffs. Reflexivity flourishes when personal reflection is accompanied by professional dialogue. In order for these processes to take place in schools, leaders must provide daytime work for learning communities to develop. Postmodern notions of power imply the development of and commitment to shared power and transformative leadership. "Postmodernity calls us to

breakdown the distinctions among individuals and groups, to challenge traditional beliefs about 'leaders and followers' and to create environments where leadership emerges naturally, from different places in the school system and in response to current needs" (Sackney, Walker, & Mitchell, 1999, p. 50). There are other important roles for postmodern leaders as well.

Johnson (1996) puts forward several types of leadership required to effectively develop new patterns of school structure and relationships suited to postmodern school systems. He examines transactional, transformational, cultural, and critical types of leadership. His definition of *leadership* is suited to postmodern educational environments:

> Leadership tends to connote the ability to re-conceptualize organizational structures and relationships and to mobilize and sustain collective social action for the purpose of system change. The result is that the focus on leadership tends to stimulate interest in issues of organizational analysis and critique, stimulate the adoption of metaphors of organization based on more organic rather than mechanical systems, and increase focus on the nature of social relationships within the school and between the school and the community. (p. 215)

This kind of educational environment places educators in an untenable situation. Leaders are expected to develop a cohesive academic culture while remaining responsive to community needs and interests. At the same time, educational leaders must ensure that school cultures retain autonomy and that they are protected from pressures from diverse community groups. To accomplish such a task, educational leaders must adopt strategies of critical pragmatic political action not typically associated with school-level leadership.

Johnson (1996) suggests several types of leadership that would be most useful in addressing contemporary problems of leadership in public schools. The first type of leadership he discusses is transactional leadership. Although this type of leadership is

most likely to remain the dominant form in practice, it is weak in how it addresses aspects of the leader–follower relationship, and it appears to have little to offer with regard to issues of organizational change and development or a vision of the future (p. 228).

Transformational leadership and cultural leadership focus on the role of higher moral sentiments and the development of a collective vision of possibilities and purpose. This attention is consistent with the shift in emphasis from a preoccupation with the managerial and administrative functions served by those in positions of authority to the examination of the potential leadership roles performed by people regardless of position. Transformational leadership, although considered useful in addressing contemporary problems of leadership, still exhibits traces of administrative hierarchies and manipulation of subordinates.

Cultural leadership recognizes, more than does transformational leadership, the social/sociological nature of organizational change and development. Given accelerating changes in the cultural environment of schools and the changes in school organization itself, recognition of the sociological nature of schools is a strength of cultural leadership. However, a limitation of this type of leadership is its tendency to neglect examination of the interrelationships between organizational structure and culture. Johnson (1996) believes that

> Critical leadership appears to offer a way to combine concern with both structure and culture without privileging either. The inclusion of consideration of structural influences also seems to be of particular significance given the general movement in recent years toward restructuring as the preferred school reform strategy. (p. 229)

He supports the critical leadership type because it attempts to develop alternative interpretive frameworks through ongoing and on-site education. Therefore, if school organizations are interested in making fundamental changes to the structure of schooling consistent with the principles of democratic and equitable participation in decision-making, critical leadership is preferable to either transformative or cultural leadership.

The Search for Leadership

Fidler (1997) provides what he considers to be two key features of leadership: A sense of purpose and confidence is engendered in followers, and the followers are influenced toward goal achievement. Therefore, the effects of leadership are apparent in the feelings and actions of followers and in task achievement. Fidler points out that studies of leaders outside of context do not provide many insights into leadership. Leadership should be contingent and, although a leader may have a preferred leadership style, this may need to be varied according to circumstances. This reference to context and leadership makes a connection between leadership and organizations. Organizations need leadership. Leadership should be associated with roles throughout an organization, although the needs of leadership will change depending on the position in the organization.

The Relationship of Leadership and Management

What is similar to both leadership and management? Two dimensions—concern for people and concern for results—are used to identify two independent components of the role. As well, the sources of power used by leaders and managers share a common

framework, with power based on organizational position, expertise, and personal characteristics or behaviour.

Leadership, rather than management, is identified with the more formative and proactive aspects of the direction of an organization's affairs. Therefore, leadership, according to Fidler (1997), is associated with activities such as problem solving, formulating and communicating a strategy based on a vision of a better future, and inspiring followers to strive toward it. The more supportive role is assigned to management, and it involves planning and systematic procedures to ensure that activities resulting from leadership activities actually happen.

Situational Leadership

A major breakthrough in how we think about leadership has been the recognition that a contingent or situational approach is necessary. Several factors influence which leadership is appropriate. Context is an important factor. Other key variables in choosing an effective leadership style include the leader's preferred style of leadership, the maturity of the followers, the expectations of the followers, and the nature of the task to be undertaken (Fidler, 1997).

Bolman and Deal (1991) have attempted to widen the range of formulations of leadership that can inform the practice of leaders. Referring to a study of leaders of large commercial organizations, Bolman and Deal suggest a framework that includes four frames or approaches to leadership: structural, human relations, political, and symbolic.

These four frames recognize that appropriate leadership must be situational, but that a leader will probably have a preferred leadership style. The structural framework is largely focused on a rational view of management, whereas the human relations

framework concentrates on the behavioural aspects of management and harnessing the motivation and commitment of employees. The political framework recognizes that individuals both within and external to an organization have their own private agendas or interests. The final frame in Bolman and Deal's (1991) work is the symbolic framework, which is also referred to as visionary and transformational leadership.

Leading Professional and Chief Executive: Moral Leadership

Schools have special features that influence school leadership on a theoretical and a practical level. Schools are diffused yet value-based and to some extent have self-selected outcomes. Both means and ends are important. The organization has a moral purpose, and the core workforce is professional. A school leader is required to be the leading professional, or at least *a* leading professional. A school leader must espouse professional values and possess appropriate professional knowledge and judgement. In order to influence classroom practice, he or she must have the appropriate pedagogic and curricular knowledge (Fidler, 1997).

Organizational culture reflects "how we do things around here" and "how we think it right to do things around here." Schools are, because of the work they do, likely to have either an implicit or an explicit requirement to contribute to the moral education of the young. For this reason, Fidler (1997), like Sergiovanni (1992), suggests that school leaders should be moral leaders. This leads to the question, Should leaders have certain moral qualities and should their actions have certain moral requirements? It also raises the question, Does a school need to organize in a moral way to develop adults with a moral sense? And, finally, How does this affect the management of schools as moral organizations?

Curriculum Leadership

Of greatest interest to this study is the understanding of the key ideas of curriculum leadership. Curriculum leadership can be considered from two points of view—the tasks to be achieved (functional approach) and the means by which these tasks are achieved (process approach).

Krug (1992) identifies five components of curriculum leadership that are part of the functional approach:

- Defining mission
- Managing curriculum and instruction
- Supervising teaching
- Monitoring student progress
- Promoting instructional climate

The five categories above provide a functional view of the components of curriculum leadership but give little insight into how they may be accomplished. A number of writers offer suggestions about a process approach. Firestone and Wilson (1985) identify three means of linking the behaviour of the principal to classroom processes:

- Bureaucratic and structural linkages—including policies; rules and procedures; plans and schedules; vertical information systems; supervision and evaluation
- Direct interpersonal linkages—working with and influencing individual teachers' classroom practice
- Cultural linkages—shared meanings and assumptions that influence actions powerfully because they are implicit and rarely consciously questioned

Firestone and Wilson also point out that the research on effective schools tends to highlight individual principal behaviour and the effects of direct supervision of teachers and underemphasizes the indirect structural and cultural linkages. Bureaucratic and cultural influences should reinforce each other.

Curriculum Management in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Research and conceptual work on curriculum leadership has focused mainly on elementary schools and much less on secondary schools. School size, curriculum complexity, and staffing structures suggest that the situation in secondary schools may have important differences. Little and Bird (1987) indicate that, in a small number of secondary schools in America, three mechanisms for influencing teachers' classroom practices have been identified:

- Inviting curriculum advisers from outside the school to work with teachers
- Observing and directly working with individual teachers or sympathetic working groups of teachers
- Encouraging collaboration between middle-level leaders (for example, department heads)

In a case study of secondary schools in Australia, Dimmock and Wildy (1995) found that different facets of curriculum leadership were identified with different levels in the school. The principal and senior school management were associated with overall direction and symbolic activities, whereas the main day-to-day activity was seen to emanate from middle managers and teachers. Therefore, although the principal had some direct influence on students' and teachers' curriculum, it was evident that leadership was mainly achieved through an indirect process of working with and through department

heads to influence the school's culture. In this situation, political skills would be expected to be in evidence, because departments were likely to perceive advantages and disadvantages in different courses of action and likely reflect power bases that needed to be acknowledged.

Research on Curriculum Leadership

The contribution of research to curriculum leadership has been rather disappointing. Few studies have collected data over a number of years to investigate changing outcomes as principal behaviour varies. The usual cross-sectional research design may not be able to isolate differences due to principal behaviour from all the other influences affecting the outcomes of schools, particularly if much of the principal's effect is indirect. The leader–follower effect may also be obscured by such designs. Though countless studies of school effectiveness in America have found some association between effective schools and the leadership of the principal, this was usually behaviour of a general kind. Studies that specifically looked for a relationship between curriculum leadership activities and effective schools have failed to find a clear effect (Leitner, 1994).

Though the emphasis here has been on contingent and situational responses to the needs of the particular context in which leaders operate, individual leaders will have their preferred personal approaches. These may make them better or less equipped to provide appropriate leadership in a particular context. The work of Bolman and Deal (1991) encourages school leaders to seek others in the senior or middle management group who might have complementary strengths. This gives school leadership the opportunity to provide a range of coordinated and situationally appropriate approaches.

Given the uncertain and diverse environment in which school leaders find themselves, it may be appropriate to pay greater attention to the political and symbolic aspects of their work. When diverse interests and expectations are present, the political arts of advocacy and coalition building are likely to be particularly needed. In a postmodern environment in which the future is less predicable, and those in organizations need to believe in what they do, the symbolic acts of vision building and inspiration are also likely to be indispensable.

Finally, it is worth reiterating one point: Although leadership from senior figures is important, many other positions and individuals in schools, such as department heads, should be encouraged to provide leadership for particular tasks or particular sections of the school. This has the capacity both to benefit the school and to prepare such people for future senior leadership opportunities.

Context

West-Burnham (1997) states that the semantics of leadership are fundamental to the creation of meaning and to perceptions, expectations, and behaviour:

> Attitudes and "theories of practice" are constructs derived from a prevailing culture and expressed, reinforced and elaborated into practice though language. Therefore the vocabulary, definitions, and metaphors of leadership will be powerful forces in formulating attitudes, expressed as they are, through the symbolism of schools, the intent of training and development activities and the discourse that is employed in all the events that inform the culture of a school. (p. 231)

If a school or any organization is to be capable of transforming itself to meet the needs of a postmodern society, it must be led by people capable of realizing personal transformation. The starting point for re-engineering schools is re-engineering perceptions of leadership (p. 232).

The context that school leaders work in is no longer bureaucratic. Schools are site-based managed; they face increasing amounts of standardized testing; social, economic, and technological change is experimental; and, most significantly, school leaders face the growing awareness that the world is not linear but, rather, complex and chaotic. Therefore, the language used to talk about leadership must change to reflect the world in which leaders can lead and learners can learn.

Intellectualism

The role of teachers as intellectuals is essential if the educative and transformational role of schools is to be refined and strengthened. Decisions about teacher practice require intellectual input to avoid the danger that the decisions will be reductionist, bureaucratic, and a denial of the social purposes of education. As well, it is difficult to develop as a reflective practitioner outside the context of an intellectual perspective. This is so because reflective practice implies the ability to conceptualize, analyze, establish causal relationships, and draw conclusions. According to West-Burnham (1997), these qualities are at the heart of effective pedagogic practice, just as they are central to the learning process.

According to Said (1996) and discussed in West-Burnham (1997), a true intellectual has four characteristics: a love for and an unquenchable interest in the larger picture, making connections, refusing to specialize, and caring about ideas and values. For leaders in schools, Said's four points offer a powerful parallel between the qualities of leadership and the overarching educative purpose of the school. Therefore, if school leaders function as intellectuals, they are more apt to create a culture that allows others to function as intellectuals. For some, functioning in schools in this way may be

uncomfortable, but given the moral nature and social significance of the educational process, the development of a critical and creative perspective on leadership is essential.

Artistry and Spirituality

Traditional management skills are unable to cope with the complexity of the creative process. The work of school leaders, such as schemes of work, school timetables, and so on, is literally pointless if not set within the context of a vision of a school as a learning community. West-Burnham (1997) writes,

> The leader as artist is thus a central notion to the process of realization—translating ideals into concrete outcomes. Leaders need three qualities that are found in artists—vision, creativity, and the ability to communicate. Much has been written on the centrality of vision to quality, school improvement, and school effectiveness. However, it is unlikely that any school can have a vision per se; it has to be a school understanding which is initially individually articulated. . . Given the context that schools increasingly have to function in and the complexity of creating a learning organization, it is essential that leaders are capable of the "fundamental re-orientation"; conceptualizing a new paradigm. (pp. 237–238)

Creativity is central to appropriate models of leadership for learning. As well, it is essential that leaders have the ability to communicate their vision to the other members of their organization. Like effective teachers, leaders must educate the members of the organization about their vision in order for change to occur (West Burnham, 1997).

Competency approaches to management miss the holistic view of the person being managed. Leadership must not focus only on the parts but, rather, be more holistic or spiritual in its perspectives. These higher-order perspectives could come from a range of origins, including a specific religious affiliation. A personal worldview is the basis of self-awareness and interpretation and a prerequisite to the process of reflection. The process of self-reflection is key to personal learning and growth through transformation (West-Burnham, 1997).

Moral Confidence

The quality of moral confidence is closely related to spirituality in that a moral code is often the most overt manifestation of any personal belief system. West-Burnham (1997) writes,

> The term "moral confidence" is used to stress the importance attached to the capacity to act in a way that is consistent with an ethical system and is consistent over time. This requires confidence in terms of acceptance and understanding of the ethical system and the ability to interpret it in a wide range of situations. Schools are complex communities—there are no value-free decisions where the learning of young people is involved. Equally, schools are understood through the actions of individual—what in the Total Quality movement are known as "moments of truth," actions, which are the direct and immediate reflection of a moral code. (p. 240)

West-Burnham draws on Sergiovanni's notion of "leadership as pedagogy" (or "practise what you preach") because it captures the essence of leadership for transformed schools. There is a need at a time of social and moral uncertainty for leaders to exemplify not a specific code but, rather, the existence and understanding of a personal ethical framework and the ability to translate it into validated and justified outcomes.

The morally confident leader, according to West-Burnham (1997), is someone who can demonstrate casual consistency between principle and practice, apply principles to new situations, create shared understanding and a common vocabulary, explain and justify decisions in moral terms, sustain principles over time, and reinterpret and restate principles as necessary. In essence, *moral confidence* can be defined as "the product of a learning process which makes direct use of higher order cognitive skills. The process of becoming and developing as a leader in the process of learning to think and of learning to learn" (West-Burnham, 1997, p. 241).

Reconceptualizing Leadership Roles

In a time of complexity, chaos, and rapid change, leadership through control will inevitably produce brittle organizations and brittle people (West-Burnham, 1997):

> Subsidiarity confronts the status of headship, the validity of hierarchy and the notion of delegation as the basis of effective leadership. Control and delegation, and the cultural manifestations of seniority, are inappropriate models for organizations that have to change rapidly and that are primarily concerned with learning. Central to the concept of subsidiarity is the notion of trust—willingly surrendering power rather than delegating it and structuring organizations to institutionalize and reinforce trust. (pp. 241–242)

Newman and Simmons (2000) state that leadership should focus on student achievement. Schools that exhibit leadership focused on student achievement include the following strategies in their efforts:

- develop a shared vision,
- determine clear priorities,
- promote continuous professional learning,
- link schools to community assets,
- provide a strong accountability system, and
- reorganize the school/district structure. (p. 10)

In the most effective schools, leadership was distributed; every member of the education community had the responsibility and the authority to take appropriate leadership roles. Leadership had been reconceptualized to include all facets of the school community. The definition of *leader* in these schools and districts was broadened to include teachers, staff members, parents, and members of the entire education community. This definition included department heads as curriculum leaders.

Today's educational leaders are being asked to assume more and more diverse responsibilities, including building strong cultures that foster collegiality, support experimentation, provide feedback, and encourage reflection. At the same time, they are expected to develop and keep the schools' or districts' vision, articulate and model core

values, ensure the inclusion of all voices, develop collaborative learning experiences, and, last but not least, keep the buses running on time. This huge job description is too much for the principal, the superintendent, or the teacher leader. Therefore, "school leadership needs to be redistributed in ways that share responsibilities across the school community and that value collaborative decision making" (Newman & Simmons, 2000, p. 10). Distributed leadership has the characteristics of site-based management. It is defined in the article as follows:

> "Distributed leadership" calls on everyone associated with schools—principals, teachers, school staff members, district personnel, parents, community members, and students—to take responsibility for student achievement and to assume leadership roles in areas in which they are competent and skilled. "Leadership" is no longer seen as a function of age, position or job title. Indeed, it is a characteristic less of an individual than of a community and is a responsibility assumed with the consent of the community. (p. 10)

Newman and Simmons (2000) suggest that distributed leadership would give districts and schools the ability to make lasting improvements in student achievement. It will take a paradigm shift to look at school and district leadership in this way. It will require reinventing what leadership in schools and districts looks like. Most importantly, it will require being more inclusive about who is involved in leadership.

Components of Leadership

Fullan (2001) asserts that leadership has five components: understanding of the change process, strong relationships, knowledge-building, coherence-making among multiple priorities, and moral purpose. The fifth component—moral purpose—appears in the research literature more frequently and has its place as a type of leadership, leadership with moral purpose that is suited to leading in a postmodern world.

Fullan (2001) believes that, regardless of one's leadership style, every leader, to be effective, must have and improve moral purpose. Moral purpose involves both ends and means. It is crucial that educational leaders make a difference in the lives of their students while treating fairly and well the teachers who work with them in achieving this goal. Otherwise, leaders find themselves without followers. Furthermore, to strive to improve the quality of how we work together is a moral purpose of the highest order.

Moral purpose, defined at its loftiest level, is "about how humans evolve over time, especially in relation to how they relate to each other" (Fullan, 2001, p. 14). All effective leaders are driven by both egoistic (self-centred) and altruistic (unselfish) motives. Moral purpose stands not alone but, rather, with the other four components—understanding the change process, strong relationships, knowledge-building, and coherence-making among multiple priorities.

Fullan's (2001) most fundamental conclusion is that moral purpose and sustained performance of organizations are mutually dependent. Leaders in a culture of change realize this.

Fullan (2002) focuses on effective school leaders, specifically principals involved in the change process, but he also supports the development of instructional leaders in various roles within schools to assist principals with their work as instructional leaders in a culture of change.

When educators characterized the central role of principals in curriculum leadership, they took a valuable step in increasing student learning. To go the next step, which involves problem-solving and thinking skills, nurturing highly motivated and engaged learners, and ensuring deeper learning, principals must mobilize teachers. They

can accomplish this by improving teachers' working conditions and morale (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). Education will require leaders who create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and in the teaching profession.

School leaders with moral purpose seek to make a difference in the lives of students. They are concerned with closing the gap between high-performing and low-performing schools and between high-performing and low-performing students. They work to improve not only their own schools but also the environment in other district schools.

Being a change agent in a culture of change involves getting commitment from others who might not like one's ideas. To accomplish this, leaders build relationships with diverse people and groups. People who think differently from the leader are consulted. In particular, the culture-change principal's efforts to motivate and energize disaffected teachers can have a profound impact on the overall climate of the school. In the words of Fullan (2002, p. 18), "Well-established relationships are the resource that keeps on giving."

Effective leadership involves creating and sharing information. Information becomes knowledge through social processes, making professional learning communities essential. Therefore, it is important that organizations foster knowledge-giving and knowledge-seeking. This process is supported by culture-change principals because they appreciate that teaching is both an intellectual and a moral profession. Therefore, these principals constantly remind teachers that they are engaged in practising, studying, and refining the craft of teaching.

Sustainability in a culture of change must be cultivated so that the system can continue to regenerate itself and improve. The key components of sustainability include developing the social environment, learning in context, cultivating leaders at many levels, ensuring leadership succession, and enhancing the teaching profession.

Cultivating Leaders at Many Levels

Leadership for school improvement, or the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent for the purpose of school improvement through improved student achievement, is the focus of this study. Leaders need to be cultivated at many levels in schools. Fullan (2002) writes,

> An organization cannot flourish—at least not for long—on the actions of the top leaders alone. Schools and districts need many leaders at many levels. Learning in context helps produce such leaders. Further, for leaders to be able to deal with complex problems, they need many years of experience and professional development on the job. To a certain extent, a school leader's effectiveness in creating a culture of sustained change will be determined by the leaders he or she leaves behind. (p. 20)

Also crucial to sustained improvement is the effective succession of leaders. Leadership succession is more likely if there are many leaders at many levels. For this to occur, leaders must be prepared for and committed to moving in a sustained direction. Collins (2001) suggests that

> Leaders who build enduring greatness are not high-profile, flashy performers but, rather, individuals who blend extreme personal humility with intense professional will. Sustainability depends on many leaders—thus, the qualities of leadership must be attainable by many, not just a few. (p. 20)

It is clear that focusing on the role of the principal as curriculum leader has taken us to a certain point on the continuum established for continual school improvement. Further school improvement depends on principals who can foster the conditions

necessary for sustained education reform in a complex, rapidly changing society. A specific example of fostering change is cultivating leaders, such as department heads who serve as curriculum leaders in their departments and schools. In doing so, they can also lead the change process for other schools in the district.

The role of the postmodern curriculum leader is different from that of its predecessors. Creative curriculum leaders use their talents to help others identify and use their own talents. This is different from the role commonly prescribed, wherein the leader gets others to do what he or she wants them to do, regardless of whether they want to do it. The role of the creative curriculum leader is "to establish lateral relationships with others, so that they are empowered to run new directions for themselves within the organizational structure of schools and school systems" (Brubaker, 1994, p. 67).

Creative curriculum leadership is likely to be more difficult and challenging than top-down manipulation leadership, which in effect uses others for the gains of the person in authority. The leader as learner makes the difference in creating community. Brubaker (1994) challenges curriculum leaders to "integrate the spirit of the artist with the spirit of the scientist, for such an integration is essential for creative curriculum leadership in the 21st century" (pp. 90–91).

The Department Head as Curriculum Leader

Brown (1993) focuses on the changing views of leadership in organizations, specifically on transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership is multidimensional. Transformational leadership is concerned with values, beliefs, norms, goals, and feelings. The six practices associated with transformational leadership are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

The Six Practices Associated With Transformational Leadership

Practice	**Description**
Identifying and articulating a vision	Practices on the part of the leader aimed at identifying new opportunities for his or her school and developing, articulating, and inspiring others with his or her vision of the future
Providing an appropriate model	Practices on the part of the leader that set an example for teachers to follow that is consistent with the values the leader espouses
Fostering the acceptance of group goals	Practices on the part of the leader aimed at promoting cooperation between teachers and helping them work together toward a common goal
High performance expectations	Practices that demonstrate the leader's expectations for excellence, quality, and/or high performance on the part of teachers
Providing individualized support	Practices on the part of the leader that indicate that he or she respects teachers and is concerned about their personal feelings and needs
Intellectual stimulation	Practices on the part of the leader that challenge teachers to re-examine their assumptions about their work and to rethink how it can be performed

Brown's (1993) study focuses on leadership in high schools and outlines the work of principals, vice-principals, and department heads. The leadership role of the department head is of most interest to this study.

Brown (1993) refers to department heads as transformational leaders, which is relevant to this study because it summarizes the leadership roles undertaken by the

department head, which include departmental administrator, curriculum leader, curriculum and program developer, conflict manager, provider of recognition and support, colleague and friend, change agent, information provider, and attendee at meetings of department heads. Brown describes the department head's work not within the traditional roles and responsibilities statement for a secondary school department head but, rather, within the framework of the curriculum leader in a secondary school.

Being on the front line of curriculum leadership requires the department head to act in different roles, including those shown in Table 2. All of these roles are identified and defined in Miles (1984) and Henderson (1993) and in the interviews that serve as the foundation of this case study.

Table 2

Roles of the Department Head

Role	Description
Departmental administrator	The department head assumes responsibility for many administrative details pertaining to the department, such as approving examinations, ordering books and other course materials, ensuring that there are sufficient instructional supplies, and so on.
Curriculum leader	The department head is expected to provide leadership within the curriculum area (for example, writing proposals for new initiatives).

Role	Description
Conflict manager	The department head is expected to settle disputes between teachers in the department, between teachers and students, between teachers and administrators, and between departments.
Provider of recognition and support	The department head is in the best position to know what individual teachers in the department are doing, and part of the role is to let people know they are doing a good job. The department head is also in the best position to ensure that teachers have input into curriculum decisions, that their ideas are listened to, and that they are given the support they need.
Colleague and friend	The interpersonal aspects of the department head's role are very important. Success depends on the type of people the department head has to work with.
Change agent	The department head requires vision, philosophies, and commitment to improving programs and courses for students. The department head must be willing to work hard and fight for his or her vision of what could be.

Role	Description
Information provider	The administration expects the department head to stimulate the members of the department to think about their jobs in new ways. Using the bureaucratic process set up to develop and implement a school plan, the department head can be expected to work with the department in establishing goals and objectives, which are also linked to teachers' personal objectives in the school's teacher-evaluation plan. The expectation is also that the department head will ensure that information is shared within the department.
Attendee at meetings of department heads	Department heads as a group are an important part of the decision-making structure of the school.

Lee and Dimmock (1999) state that little is known about how and by whom curriculum leadership and management occur in secondary schools. Qualitative-research methods, specifically case studies, are "highly appropriate for exposing and interpreting the lived experience of curriculum management from the perspectives of the participants" (p. 456).

Although much research advocates the important role played by principals in curriculum leadership and management, the beliefs concerning the principal as the primary or most important instructional leader require rethinking (Lee & Dimmock, 1999). Glickman (1989) argues that a principal, rather than being the sole curriculum leader, should be the leader of teachers as curriculum leaders. Lofthouse et al. (1995)

claim that curriculum management is a collaborative activity and not the responsibility only of identified individuals within the formal management structure. In response to the increasing impact of school-based management, teacher leaders in Glickman's study were recruited to take up more responsibilities in school governance, including the leadership of curriculum and instruction.

It is abundantly clear that head teachers and principals in both primary and secondary schools and deputy (assistant) principals in primary schools can act as curriculum leaders, and department heads or subject coordinators can act as curriculum managers. However, in view of trends toward teacher empowerment and a collegial approach to curriculum management, teachers should be encouraged to become both curriculum leaders and managers, particularly teachers who are also department heads. This again supports the focus of this study of the department head as a curriculum leader serving as a curriculum-change agent.

Brown and Rutherford (1998) show that middle managers (that is, department heads) are the key to the development of successful departments and successful schools. They synthesize models for school improvement and describe a general twofold strategy for developing successful schools, which requires departments to improve teaching and students' learning and their capacity to both make and implement policy to facilitate the process of change. In addition, they suggest that "heads of department were the key to developing successful departments and, hence, successful schools" (p. 75).

A Typology for Department Heads as Curriculum Leaders

Brown and Rutherford (1998) tested the validity of a typology of leadership developed by Murphy (1992). Murphy's typology contains four interrelated leadership

and managerial roles: the department head as a servant leader, an organizational architect, a moral educator, and a social architect. Brown and Rutherford add a fifth role: leading professional. This typology, like the article's literature review, informs my study and is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Typology of Leadership

Role	Description
Department head as servant leader	First, Murphy argues that a leader must lead not from the apex of the traditional pyramid but from the nexus of a web of interpersonal relationships, *with* people rather than *through* them. His or her base of influence must be professional expertise rather than line authority. The department head must lead not by controlling teachers but by empowering them to release their latent creative abilities.
Department head as organizational architect	Second, Murphy argues that if a school is to be improved, the department head must create new organic forms of departmental structure. These flatter structures, in which leadership is widely shared, promote a greater degree of ownership and, hence, the development of a more committed workforce in the department.

Role	Description
Department head as moral educator	Third, Murphy argues that, as a moral educator, the department head must be motivated by a set of deep personal values and beliefs. He or she must demonstrate the ethic of care to all by concentrating on people first, by valuing each member of the department (not forgetting support staff and students), and by responding to their unique qualities and needs.
Department head as social architect	Fourth, Murphy argues that the department head must be at the forefront of efforts to design and construct social networks to address the worsening conditions confronting many students and their families. He or she must develop integrated networks of partnerships with other groups and, particularly, forge new links with parents that will enable them to support their children's learning more effectively. He or she must also be sensitive to issues of race and to goals of equal opportunity.
Department head as leading professional	This essentially developmental role, which is not captured in Murphy's typology, focuses on improving teaching, learning, and achievement in the department. The department head must be up to date with curriculum developments and be a more-than-competent teacher to retain credibility (arguably the foundation of effective leadership) with colleagues in the department.

Busher and Harris (1999) look at department heads as "managers in the middle"—managers instrumental in making schools effective. Department heads are

front-line leaders whose degree of participation in strategic matters or organization decision-making varies dramatically according to the nature of the organization, the management approach of senior staff, and the culture of the organization. The level of involvement is a function of the confidence, expertise, and management skills exhibited by the middle manager or subject leader. Although recognition of the role of the department head has been shown to be very important to the personnel concerned (Glover et al., 1998), the status- and power-based recognition that department heads want is often complicated by the multiplicity of tasks they are undertaking.

The literature on school effectiveness designates characteristics such as goal consensus, collaborative norms, and shared experiences as essential components of effective schools, there is less clarity about how to achieve such social cohesiveness. Busher and Harris (1999) conclude,

> It is clear that heads of department . . . can play a central role in defining and sustaining collegial sub-cultures, by ensuring departments operate as socially cohesive communities where all members work collaboratively with a high degree of commitment. Within this management role, more than any other, is the real potential of organizational change and improvement.

Turner (1996) focuses on the contribution of department heads to whole-school effectiveness through their work in management and leadership, ethos, aims and vision, professional working relationships, structure, decision-making, communication, and monitoring and evaluation. By serving as curriculum leaders who influence effective teaching and learning outcomes in their subject-area departments, department heads contribute to the development of effective schools. Turner acknowledges that this is an area of research where little has been done and that the literature tends to view the role of

the department head from a holistic point of view rather than to link it to the impact on classroom teaching and learning processes. Turner states,

> It is important to develop an understanding of the [department head's] role, with its associated tasks, since it is the middle managers in any secondary school who have the delegated responsibility for the introduction, implementation, and evaluation of a variety of educational policies at the subject level, which can therefore be considered as a vital aspect of school improvement. The role of [department head] has tended to be neglected by researchers, because generalizations are particularly difficult when one considers the enormous complexity of different types and sizes of departments which exist in each school. (p. 203)

Turner's (1996) views also support the need for my study of the role, because it has the potential to contribute to the sparse research literature linking the leadership role of the department head and how it affects teaching and learning in the classroom.

A Model of the Department Head's Role in Effective School Management

The following model proposed by Turner (1996) provides the context for the role of the department head in effective school management. Possible approaches for influencing knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes of teachers are as follows:

- Engaging in direct classroom observation
- Providing feedback on performance
- Discussing the vision for the department and how it might be achieved
- Encouraging teamwork
- Engaging in informal discussion
- Planning and implementing a subject-based curriculum
- Organizing meetings to share good practice, discuss marking policy, discuss effective teaching methods, and so on
- Representing the department's interests to the senior management team

- Undertaking classroom appraisal
- Engaging in staff development

Harris and Jamieson (1995) explored the key features of effective departments in British secondary schools. These subject departments added significant value to students' learning Their findings helped me to identify features that could also be instrumental in the role of department heads as curriculum-change agents in implementing Alberta's newest English language arts program of studies. Harris and Jamieson list the following features as contributing to effective departments:

- a collegiate management style;
- a strong vision of the subject effectively translated down to the classroom level;
- good organization in terms of assessment, record keeping, homework, etc.;
- good resource management;
- an effective system for monitoring and evaluating;
- structured lessons and regular feedback;
- clear routines and practices with lessons;
- a syllabus matching the needs and abilities of pupils;
- a strong pupil-centered ethos that systematically rewarded pupils;
- opportunities for autonomous pupil learning;
- a central focus on teaching and learning.

In a later study, Harris (1998) looked at school improvement at the department level by focusing on what was learned in studying ineffective departments in secondary schools. Harris's study sought to ascertain whether ineffective departments suffered from an absence of effective characteristics, or whether other features or dimensions made them less effective. The study revealed "that the less effective departments did share certain features and did exhibit certain failure characteristics, or factors" (p. 273). Harris found the general features of the less effective departments to be as follows:

- inappropriate management and leadership styles
- lack of vision for the department and the departmental subject(s)
- poor communication within the department

- poor organization
- inadequate monitoring and evaluation
- non-collegial departmental climate
- no leading professional within the department
- absence of professional development and learning
- insufficient focus upon teaching and learning

Some of these characteristics are the opposite of those found in earlier studies on effective departments. However, this study presented other failure factors, as well. Harris states,

> These failure characteristics tended to be those associated with the quality of teaching, teaching relationships and professional development. Of all the variables under the control of the school and its departments, teaching has the most demonstrable impact upon student learning. Consequently, within these less effective departments, the absence of collegial relationships and professional dialogue about teaching and learning points to a central reason for their under performance. (p. 274)

The idea of a department differential capacity for development remains somewhat speculative (Harris, 1998). However, it is increasingly being grounded in data emerging from the current research studies. The list of strategies for improving the failing or ineffective department is still in the early stages of development. However, these strategies provide a holistic approach to departmental improvement, an undertaking that is important because it provides tangible ways for secondary departments to improve teaching and learning and, in doing so, to become effective departments that contribute to effective schools.

Leadership Literature and Its Applicability to the Role of the Department Head as a Curriculum-Change Agent in the Implementation of the Newest Alberta English Language Arts Program of Studies

Postmodernism has the potential to provide powerful images, metaphors, and ways of thinking that lead us to reconsider the issues that trouble educational

organizations. These issues include control and autonomy, structure and process, information and participation, and planning and sense-making. The case studies undertaken in this dissertation describe the role of the secondary English department head in a postmodern context. Within postmodern secondary English departments, new models of leading and organizing to lead are present and emerging. This has left the views of power, structure, efficacy, time, and change open to question and to disclosure through case-study research. As well, postmodern organizations are learning organizations. This case-study research will help educators to learn from the work of other educators by developing a metaphor, picture, or snapshot of the best practices of two English department heads working as curriculum leaders. This information will inform the work of a variety of educational leaders working in a variety of roles and locations in educational organizations. Thus, this case-study research, presented within the context of the research literature in postmodernism, has the potential to inform practice in postmodern organizations through inquiry, description, and reflection.

Different kinds of leaders working in different relationships are emerging in the postmodern era. This requires that our organizations be thought of in terms of processes and relationships rather than structures and rules (Sergiovanni, 1994). Leadership in the future is expected to be more collaborative and more distributed. It will rely on expertise rather than rank for the primary base of leadership authority. Leaders working in decentralized organizations will be required to facilitate the development of meaning and the building of relationships through the development and sharing of a common language. Power will be knowledge-based, rather than position-based. Many different types of leadership are being proposed for postmodern organizations, including

transactional, cultural, and critical leadership, as well as situational leadership, leading professional and chief executive, moral leadership, and curricular leadership.

Curriculum leadership is of special interest to this case-study research. It is highly appropriate to think of secondary subject department heads as curriculum leaders and as curriculum-change agents. An expanded notion or definition of ways of serving as a curriculum leader is provided in Appendixes A–C. Curriculum leadership is the responsibility and work not only of the principal but also of other leaders in decentralized districts and schools, such as subject department heads. Therefore, "within this middle management role, more than others, is the real potential of organizational change and improvement" (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 316).

Fullan (2002) examines leadership for school improvement, or the role of the subject department head as a curriculum-change agent for the purpose of school improvement through increased student achievement. Fullan emphasizes the necessity of cultivating leadership at many levels in schools. Fullan believes that focusing solely on the work of the principal as the curriculum leader in a school can take us only so far on the continuum of continued school improvement. Ongoing improvement will depend on principals who can foster the conditions necessary for sustained educational reform in a complex and ever-changing society. This includes cultivating other curriculum leaders in schools, such as subject department heads who can serve as curriculum leaders in a variety of roles, like that of curriculum-change agents within their departments, schools, and other parts of the education community.

Curriculum leaders need strategies and skills to do their work. As stated by Lee and Dimmock (1999), little is known about how and by whom curriculum leadership and

management really occurs in schools, specifically secondary schools. My research attempts to "illuminate the lived experiences of curriculum management from the perspective of the participants" (Lee & Dimmock, 1999, p. 456), to give a picture, or a snapshot, of how department heads who work as curriculum leaders in a decentralized organization use specific strategies and skills in their work. My work may inform the practice of curriculum leaders, regardless of position or location, working toward school improvement in their parts of the school community.

This literature review has focused on curriculum leadership in postmodern organizations. This literature informs the case-study description of the role of the English department head as a change agent in the implementation of Alberta's newest secondary English language arts program of studies. As well, the case study will become part of the research literature on leadership in postmodern school organizations and, in doing so, inform the practice of curriculum leaders in various parts of and positions in the education community. This literature review brings together the historical review of the roles and responsibilities of secondary subject department heads, their work in a postmodern school environment, and their potential to serve as curriculum leaders in the education community.

CHAPTER 4

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT AND CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP

Introduction

This section of the study deals with the impact of site-based management on curriculum leadership. It strives to provide insights into how the role of secondary subject department heads has been affected by the implementation of site-based management in Alberta school jurisdictions. It includes a theoretical snapshot of distributed leadership and a historical perspective on how site-based management began in Alberta. This is followed by interviews with three education leaders about the place of curriculum within the framework of site-based management and a synopsis of the kinds of assistance and approaches possible for curriculum leaders who work in site-based managed school districts.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Gronn (2000) helps to clarify the theoretical underpinnings and the rationale for site-based management. His discussion of distribution begins with the sub-elements of structural relations that compose an organization. The five most significant of these are authority, values, interests, personal factors, and resources. He states,

> Distributed forms may be achieved by any number of modes of allocating the components, but principally by means of stratification, laterality, aggregation, webbing, networking, clustering or randomness . . . at any one point in time in an ongoing trajectory of organizational evolution, therefore, particular organizational forms represent oscillating possibilities or potential differences in the degree of focus or distribution taken by the properties of the components. (pp. 322–323)

Two questions emerge in Gronn's discussion: Which factors contribute to relatively dispersed or concentrated forms of leadership? and, When is the leadership of

organizations likely to take a dispersed or focused form? (p. 323). From these two questions arises a third: How can leadership be distributed? Gibb (1954) claims that leadership is probably best understood as a group quality that is either focused or dispersed.

Gibb (1954) is not comfortable with the idea of the lone leader; therefore, he espouses an interactional standpoint. Gibb notes the fluidity of conditions in which there is a readiness for leadership to pass from one person to another as the environment changes. Gibb very early on provides an emergent view of leading, which he develops by illustrating that the popular idea that leader and follower are mutually exclusive categories is not correct. Gibb (1968) puts forward the idea that leaders and followers often switch roles and that the most diligent followers often start acts of leading. One of Gibb's most important ideas is that leaders and followers function as collaborators in accomplishing group tasks, making leadership fluid and emergent, rather than a fixed phenomenon.

Incidence of Distribution

According to Gronn (2000), distributed leadership has always been present in organizations. Examples include collaborative decision-making opportunities common to most educational settings, such as teams, committees, departments, or senior management teams. As well, Gibb (1968) states that we often confuse leadership with headship. The confusion is caused when the person who is the head or authority figure is cast as the leader. Gronn (2000) recognizes that the head in an organization has the power and a sphere of influence that solidifies that he or she is also, by definition, the leader. He also says that distributed leadership is an idea whose time has come. Distributed leadership is

another name for collaboration and spreading of decision-making throughout organizations. In Alberta's school districts, distributed leadership is called site-based decision-making.

Distributed leadership's initial appeal may have been related to the realization that societies' roughly 20-year preoccupation with visionary leaders had its shortcomings—particularly in respect to the actual accomplishments of those leaders. Another process that has made distributed leadership attractive is downsizing and eliminating layers of management. All the negative consequences associated with these processes—such as the erosion of culture, loss of collective memory, and so on—weakened support for traditional manager–managed and leader–follower distinctions (Gronn, 2000). The implementation of distributed leadership has also been supported by the rise in popularity of organizational learning and the learning community as a method of dealing with the reality that the information and knowledge required to solve complex problems are available throughout organizations. The accessibility of networked electronic communications technology further aids distributed leadership. Gronn (2000) appreciates how distributed leadership mitigates organizational errors and risks:

> Distribution entails maximizing sources of information, data and judgment, and spreading the detrimental impact of the consequences of miscalculation and risk. Because of the pooling of expertise and sources of advice, it also affords an increased likelihood of detecting errors in judgment and more attention being accorded feedback. These things amount, in short, to an overall widening of the net of intelligence and resourcefulness. (p. 334)

Development of Site-Based Management in Alberta

The Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB), which serves approximately 80,000 students, pioneered the concept of site-based management in Alberta and in Canada. The reason for EPSB's move toward site-based management is captured in the following

account from the personal communication of B. McIntosh (as cited in Delaney, 1995), former principal and associate superintendent with Edmonton Public Schools:

> There once was a principal in Edmonton Public Schools who wanted to develop a library in his school. He called the Director of Library Services at the central office and received assurances that he would be able to obtain some books from the district to make his library operational. He then contacted the maintenance director at the central office looking for a supply of lumber in order to make shelves for the library, but his request was turned down. He was told that there was no money left for that kind of expenditure. A few days later, maintenance workers showed up at his school with a supply of new doors and informed him that it was time for his school doors to be replaced. The principal protested and explained that he did not need doors but, rather, shelving for his library. In disgust, he told the workers to take back the doors.

This account of the environment in which principals worked in Edmonton Public, prior to 1976, demonstrates why site-based management was considered and took root in the district. Much has been written about the EPSB experience with site-based management. However, when this study was undertaken, all Alberta school districts were involved with site-based management.

In 1968, an American educator, Dr. Rolland Jones, became the superintendent of EPSB. Jones, who was considered ahead of his time, believed that "central office administrators and supervisors should serve schools and their principals in an advisory and consultative capacity" (Kostek, as cited in Delaney, 1995, p. 53). However, Jones did not operationalize site-based decision making. It was implemented by Dr. Michael Strembitsky. Strembitsky, who had served as Jones's executive assistant, was officially appointed superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools in 1973. He defined *school-based management* as "a process in which administrative decisions and actions aimed at achieving specified results at the schools are made at the school level" (Kostek, 1992, p. 439).

Site-Based Management in Alberta

Alberta Learning (1996), in the Education Programs and Services section of its policy manual, has policy on school-based decision-making (1.8.2), which outlines how school jurisdictions will work within the framework of school-based decision-making. Distributed leadership is a reality, not a theory, in Alberta.

Alberta Learning believes that major decisions about policies, instructional programs and services, and the allocation of funds to support them must be made collaboratively. School-based decision-making should involve collaboration between the principal, superintendent, teachers, instructional support staff, parents, and the community in keeping with the policies of the board of trustees. School-based decision-making enables schools to be responsive to local needs:

> Under section 15 of the School Act, and the direction set by the "Three Year Business Plan," the principal is the key educational leader at the school level who will provide leadership in successful school-based decision-making. Principals must work with parents, teachers, and members of the community to establish a school-based decision-making process to develop school policies and budgets as well as establish the scope of the school program and extra-curricular activities. Establishing an integral relationship among teaching, learning, and the decision-making process should result in higher levels of student performance. (p. 225)

> A school and its community shall have the authority and the support to make decisions which directly impact on the education of students and shall be accountable for the results. (p. 225)

Site-Based Management and Curriculum Leadership

The preceding information on distributed leadership theory and its practical application in site-based decision-making has been included to provide the organizational philosophy and framework that Alberta's English department heads work within. To situate curriculum leadership in the evolution of site-based management and site-based management's impact on the role of the subject department heads in Alberta secondary

schools today, I conducted interviews with three educational leaders who participated in the evolution of site-based management and had an impact on curriculum leadership in the province. These interviews focused on the place of curriculum implementation and curriculum leadership in the ongoing practice of site-based management. They set out to describe the environment in which the case-study department heads worked as curriculum-change agents. The first interview was with an associate superintendent, the second with a subject-area supervisor, and the third with a high school principal. All three leaders were employed by large urban boards in Alberta. Only the portions of each interview most germane to the topic of site-based decision-making and curriculum leadership have been included. The interviews develop a clear picture of when curriculum matters were addressed as site-based management evolved and how these decisions affected the curriculum work of subject department heads in large urban high schools.

Conversations With Three Educational Leaders

Interview With an Associate Superintendent

LBB: *Let's begin with when it was decided to implement school-based budgeting in Alberta and how curriculum was thought about, talked about, and made a part of the school-based budgeting process.*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: I got involved at the ground level. I was the principal at Alberta High in those days. We were invited to participate in the school-based budgeting pilot project and try out the whole concept of site-based management. We were a very large school at that time—well over 2,000 students—and we provided a wide range of programs, including academic, general, and vocational programs. What attracted my attention at the time was the whole notion of decision-making and that there needed to be a greater involvement in decision-

making by those that were most affected by the decisions. When our school opened, a highly centralized system was in operation in our district and throughout the province. Most of the curriculum decisions were made by supervisory personnel in central office, who would communicate to department heads in high schools such things as the kinds of textbooks that should be purchased. They would even come in and supervise, oversee, and visit classrooms and classroom teachers. I always remember the drama supervisor coming into the drama teacher's classroom and basically giving directions to the teacher and evaluating the kind of program being provided by the teacher. I also remember conversations with the superintendent of the day, who said he did not want to hold the supervisor of drama or language arts or any other subject-area supervisor responsible for the results at Alberta High. He would much rather hold the subject-area teacher accountable, along with the principal.

Also, at that time, when the school board trustees were meeting to discuss the district's achievement results, they would always have the subject-area supervisors come up and inform the board in regard to the various schools' results. Our English department head would meet with the language arts supervisor, our mathematics teacher with the mathematics supervisor, and so on. And, as the principal of the school, I seldom was informed or became involved with the kind of directions that were coming to each subject department head from their subject-area supervisor. My job was the management of the system, and I had very little to do with budgeting, as well, during those days because most of the decisions about the allocation of resources or the number of teachers we could have were all made centrally. These decisions were based on a formula that was derived by the number of students you would have. So once I was given the staff that was allocated to me, I organized them.

LBB: *Did you pick the staff?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: I was consulted on staff. There were times when I was not consulted because they required immediate placement, but whenever possible, I was given choices as a principal.

LBB: *Did you interview?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, when I had the opportunity to choose. I would interview, and I would involve my department heads, and in my situation, I also involved parents and other members of our school community.

LBB: *Why did you take this approach?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: I believed it was important to have that kind of involvement. Department heads in those days formed faculty council and worked towards agreement on how the school was organized. We battled over timetabling, scheduling, space allocations, and so on.

When we became a part of school-based budgeting, one of the background issues was the whole notion of where decisions should be made and if the decision was a "real" decision what does it take to make a "real" decision? It was decided that the thing that makes decisions "real" is control of the finances, control of the money. He who writes the cheques makes the decisions! This certainly was the case in the centralized system prior to school-based budgeting, and this was why we always had to go to a supervisor to get permission to do things—because the supervisor had signing authority. Once signing authority was moved to the school level, the supervisor became an advisor to the school people because the school people were the ones that were actually making the decisions or signing the cheques. We then began to value the advice of the supervisors, not because of their position but because of the quality of the advice received. We were making the decisions and used their advice accordingly.

The notion that the decisions be tied to the financial element was very contentious at the start of the school-based budgeting process because in education we do not like to see decisions boiled down to a dollar factor. Educators, in my opinion, believed we should be making decisions in the best interests of kids, not budget requirements. Therefore, it was said by some in the beginning that the money decisions should be left with the financial experts. Within this context, the idea of school-based budgeting, as it was called in the

beginning, was of great concern for school principals of this era. Many believed they were being asked to work in the financial area, an area in which they lacked expertise.

LBB: *If you set your focus or your goal, doesn't that determine where your money goes?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, it does, and I believed that the principals in our district would eventually come around to understanding this, too. Eventually we turned the budgets into school education plans, and the education plans had budgets associated with them. Of course, the school's priorities were translated into dollars. This is where the struggle came. If you are budgeting all the time, how do you fulfill your role as an educational leader in your school? What happens to the role of the principal or the role of the department head? This was a big issue for me. I left the principal's position wanting to get principals much more involved in the whole area of decision-making. I wanted them to begin to make use of the flexibility we had with all the dollars in the schools' budgets or allocations. Another big concern was the deployment of resources to the schools. When I left Alberta High to become a senior administrator, I helped with the original design of the school-based budgeting system that was eventually adopted. It was crucial in the development of the system that the individuals who were responsible for the decisions in the schools were given the financial authority associated with those decisions.

LBB: *This background information is necessary to our discussion, but it is now prudent to ask, When you were planning for school-based budgeting, where did the curriculum side of schooling fit in?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: You are right, so let's leap ahead. Our district was very much financially driven. Allocations and budgeting concerns were at the forefront, and the notion of curriculum was not. We did know, however, that that which had been originally centralized and associated with curriculum and instruction was now going to be decentralized. This posed the question, What will

be the role of the subject-area supervisors? As I indicated earlier, they had already become advisors to the folks in the schools rather than the overseers who were responsible for the results in their curriculum area. This was a major leap, and whether it was a good leap or not, it was what was happening. Not only did it happen in the district, it was happening at the provincial level, which was evident as the directors and subject specialists at the provincial level became generalists, too.

LBB: *Does this mean they had a broader focus that was less subject-specific?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes. There were one or two districts in the province that maintained their subject-area specialists. They have maintained, over the years, that this is one of the reasons why they have maintained high levels of performance in student achievement. They believe employing subject-area expertise in their school district is a major contributor to their achievement results.

LBB: *Has this difference in approach hurt these districts?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: No, I have not seen it; I have not seen it hurting at all. But keeping that in the background, it is important to note that our superintendent knew that something was missing; that there was a missing link in our system, and what did this missing link imply in regard to curriculum and instruction? What did site-based management imply about curriculum and instruction? Now, let me tell you what the idea was, here. One of the basic principles in a large district with an effective site-based management system in place was that you needed to have a core distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the central office, the superintendent, the board, and those in the field where the work is being done. Therefore, central office will require a small amount of resources in comparison to the field, where the work is being done. In a centralized system, this is not the case. Resources are funneled from the central office to the schools in a linear fashion. When we implemented school-based budgeting, we sent the resources out to the schools. Our superintendent's model was that, in order to

have the schools make the best possible use of resources, we had to have what he called a "tight nation." This required well-structured, well-organized central control, which was created by determining what business the organization was in and within this framework giving the schools the parameters required for running their schools. We separated these elements into the *what* and the *how*. The mission of the organization was the *what*. The more refined the mission statement, the looser the needs or the *how* could be distributed to the schools. In other words, as long as schools were working within the "business of the organization" or the "mission," any decision in the schools would be fine.

LBB: *Did this provide the principals with managerial discretion?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, it did.

LBB: *Did everyone really understand what the* what *was?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: When the superintendent decided that we were to separate the *what* from the *how*, his assignment was to help the district to define the area that encompassed what teachers do. We set out to define the *what* and the *how*. So back in those days we decided to consistently use two words. Curriculum was called the *what*. To accompany the *what* at each grade level, there was to be a statement of outcomes and expectations. The *how* was the programs of instruction. We ended up calling it instruction because that is what teachers really do. Teachers take the curriculum at the grade level, which is the outcomes, and plan programs of instruction for the students that they have. Their students, of course, are all over the ballpark in terms of abilities, needs, and characteristics, but only one set of curriculum outcomes was in place at each grade level. Expert teachers are needed that can understand the needs of their students and define effective programs to meet these needs. To provide the best resources possible to meet these needs, expert judgements were required about how to implement these programs in order to achieve the curriculum. So curriculum became something students achieve or demonstrate performance in, rather than something teachers

teach. Instruction was the work of the teacher, and the students learned the outcomes and eventually they were able to demonstrate these outcomes.

LBB: *Who was available to provide advice and support to teachers? Of most importance to this study, who was available to assist department heads in secondary schools work with the teachers in their departments?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Well, in the model we set up, back in those days, the idea was that we should have experts, like a consultant or supervisor of language arts, who would be available to school staff to provide advice and support for the work of teachers or instruction. However, their authority and their contribution to classroom instruction would not come from their position, as it had in the past, but from the respect they received from the educators they served. The titles of director or supervisor were problematic and did not correctly describe the work of these individuals, who eventually were given the title of consultant. They were no longer overseeing or supervising instruction, but they were providing advice and assistance in as wide a range of instructional matters as possible.

LBB: *In today's terminology, would you call them curriculum leaders?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Absolutely!

LBB: *Given the autonomous nature of the teaching profession, was this model more collegial than bureaucratic in the way advice was provided?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Absolutely! Those who were "old thinkers" were frustrated if they were unable to get the teachers to do what they wanted them to do. Telling as the director was not the same as advising as a well-respected colleague.

LBB: *What about an assessment system for teachers? Was it a part of the model?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, performance assessment.

LBB: *Would this provide principals with a system of checks and balances to assess if appropriate instruction was being provided?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes, the key was to find the right indicators of performance. For example, how many students were participating in a particular subject and the length of time it took for individual students to go through a program. One indicator that was exciting was the idea that there was a way of tracking growth and improvement of an individual student over time. In other words, it was not as important to know how well the entire class did as it was important to know how well an individual student was growing and developing over time. This started the development of the idea of the highest level of achievement tests. A student was able to write a test, do as much as they could this year, then do the same kind of test next year and get further along the graded curriculum. This provided a testing instrument that allowed us to assess student growth. We were beginning to assess the growth or progress of the student, not the teacher.

LBB: *Was this accountability?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: It was not the accountability of the teacher that we were attempting to measure, but how well the students were doing.

LBB: *This research work is qualitative work rather than quantitative. I am telling the story, if you will, of the work of the department head as a curricular-change agent. When dealing with student performance, is there a need for qualitative assessment instruments, too?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Oh, I love this topic! This is where people like Stiggins and Wiggins and McTye and company come into the picture. There is definitely a qualitative component throughout the whole area of assessment and accountability. I would not like us to use one type of assessment at the exclusion of another. Assessment of instruction and student progress should include demonstrations, representations, and portfolios of what has been learned, as well as standardized-test scores.

LBB: *I would like to shift our conversation to the area of the type and kind of education that department heads have and how this impacts on the "mission" of the district. It has been my observation that often department heads are selected not for their training or education beyond a bachelor's degree but because they have been recognized as excellent classroom teachers or because they have good communications skills—however that has been defined by leadership staff.*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Or they are good administrators.

LBB: *Or they are good administrators. How does this impact on the business or the work of the organization?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yeah, you see this is . . . I think you have really touched on something here. If I was setting up the programs in high schools today, let's say the English programs, for the purposes of your research, I would be very concerned and very conscious of the fact that I need expertise and leadership in curriculum at the school level. If I can't find it at the school level, then I have got to find it or access it somewhere else in the system.

And who would I be looking for as department heads? I would be looking for people who have the expertise in that area. It would be curriculum expertise over management at this stage of the game because I would want the department head to be working with the teachers in his or her department to build their own strengths in their subject-area curriculum. As well, I would expect the department head to work with their teachers to improve their knowledge, skills, strategies, and methodologies in relation to what is available.

LBB: *This kind of consulting would assist in aligning classroom instruction with the provincial program of studies. Would you agree with this statement and the reality that without knowledgeable people working with teachers to keep them current, they can end up working in isolation and continue teaching the 1965 provincial program of studies regardless of the changes that have occurred?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Exactly.

LBB: *Does this mean that unless the department head is knowledgeable and has the skills and tools to effect change, it is not likely to occur?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Yes. In schools there needs to be line authority from teacher to department head, to assistant principal and then the principal. Someone in the line must have the expertise and ensure that the delivery of the curriculum through classroom instruction is as it should be.

LBB: *And if this isn't the case, do you believe that good teachers will deliver anyway?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: They are gonna starve. Eventually they will starve. It is important that the department head function as the in-house consultant or the staff curriculum expert/leader, or the teachers' instruction will starve.

LBB: *As an in-school consultant?*

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT: Absolutely, but they will need the time to do the job. They need to serve as mentors in an advisory capacity, and they need to be an absolute expert in their subject area. If called upon by a teacher, they should have the ability to assist the teacher in their subject area.

Teachers need to have someone to lean on. It may be for help with classroom management, caring for and nurturing students, and or program planning and design. They may need help in finding the best resources to fit the outcomes being taught so they are getting the best bang for the buck, and where is that going to come from if not from a curriculum leader at the school level? Like a subject-area department head.

This whole notion of where the decision-making is really taking place is where the geese that are laying the golden eggs are resting right now. I believe the superintendents of today understand this and are doing what is necessary to hatch the golden eggs. The work being done on instructional focuses in schools in some school districts in Alberta is an example of this work.

Interview Snapshot: Associate Superintendent

Site-based management was of interest to educational leaders because it provided a way for direct involvement in district decision-making by the educators most affected by the decisions. As well, it placed the accountability for decisions with those who were responsible for making the decisions. Principals and teachers in schools, rather than the director or subject supervisor working in the district office, became directly responsible for student achievement. As decisions were delegated to the school level, so was the control of the resources and the financial signing authority required to carry out those decisions. Initially, principals were concerned that they lacked the expertise and training required to manage the financial matters and wanted to leave this responsibility to district financial personnel or the "number crunchers." As the system evolved, principals became more attuned to their financial role. Budgets became school plans with budgets, the allocation of dollars reflected individual school plans, and school priorities were translated into dollars.

The initial focus of site-based management was dollar allocations and budgets, not curriculum delivery. However, curriculum delivery was affected by the initiative. Subject-area directors and supervisors located in central office became advisors, not line authority supervisors, to school personnel. As well, those working in curriculum positions in central office became generalists, working on a variety of district initiatives, not only subject-specific district initiatives. Over time this trend occurred throughout Alberta at the district and the provincial levels, and eventually educational leaders involved with the ongoing implementation of site-based management asked the question, What does site-based management imply about curriculum and instruction?

They began to answer this question by determining the business of school organizations and the necessary framework for providing schools with the parameters required for running their schools. These elements were separated into the *what* and the *how* for running schools. The mission or reason for being became the *what* of the organization, and the implementation of the district's mission in the schools became the *how*. As long as the schools were working within the business of the organization or the district's mission, any decision in schools would be acceptable to the district. Curriculum became the *what* and the instruction became the *how*. Instruction was the work of teachers in schools, and their students were expected to learn and eventually demonstrate the outcomes, or what they had learned from curriculum instruction.

As previously mentioned, experts such as district subject advisors and consultants were still available to school staffs to provide advice and support for classroom instruction. However, the services of these individuals were no longer mandatory and had to be requested by principals on behalf of their teachers. Requests were based on school needs and the respect principals had for the central service advisors. The titles director and supervisor were eventually changed to consultant, and district consultants were expected to serve as collegial curriculum leaders. Over time, as decentralization continued, school staff were expected to serve as curriculum consultants and curriculum leaders in their schools. This change also had the potential to change the role of the subject department heads in large urban high schools. It was becoming impossible for high school principals to be knowledgeable in all the subject areas taught in their schools or to find time in the day to supervise instruction in dozens of classrooms, given all the additional responsibilities assigned to a site-based management principal.

Interview With a Former Supervisor of Language Arts

LBB: *Could you provide an overview of your work as a language arts supervisor serving in a large urban district in the province of Alberta?*

SUPERVISOR: I worked as a language arts supervisor, Kindergarten to Grade 12, with the assistance of three full-time equivalent consultants. Our team was responsible for providing leadership, advice, and assistance to Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers and administration in the area of language arts. We also worked at the role of language arts in all of the students' learning. Our role was very complex.

A good part of our role was to be proactive. We worked at interpreting the provincial curriculum, and we worked with student assessment. We helped with the drafting of district exams, presented in-services with student assessment, worked on curriculum development for the district and the province. We provided teacher workshops. This was an area where we were very proactive based on what we understood from the provincial curriculum and from what we understood about our teachers and the students they were working with.

We provided workshops in areas of the curriculum we thought were really important for teachers. At one time, we had a focus on writing for a few years. We brought people in from other parts of Canada, the United States, and Britain. This included Donald Graves, Arthur Applebee, and James Britton, to name a few. They worked with teachers and with students, but our role was to work with teachers. At senior high school there were opportunities for the children to gather and listen to speakers like Monica Hughes, and then they would have an opportunity to write. We also provided opportunities for students to publish in the district's literary publication for children.

We had a philosophy of children's or students' learning and of the importance of language and all aspects of language across all subjects and all programs. We had a consistent philosophy, and we were consistent in our approach. From this, we gathered credibility with principals and teachers. This was very important because we had no authority or power to require teachers to do anything. Our credibility with the teachers and the principals was strictly based

on their understanding that our work was based on solid research and that we came from a philosophy of student learning that was consistent.

Everybody that came to work with me was selected on the basis of their understanding of students' language learning and the role that it played in all of the subject areas. Most of them had or were working on a master's degree. They had a good background in language, and many of them had a background in other subject areas or programs, as well. Consequently, we worked within a consistent philosophy and were viewed as actually knowing what we were doing.

We worked closely with the University of Alberta. A professor came over and taught an off-campus credit course, and our consultants benefited a great deal from teaching at the university.

In my role as supervisor, I was in the schools a lot. I could talk with the assistant superintendents about things I had observed in the classrooms in their schools and areas I thought they might be interested in. As a result, one of the assistant superintendents had us provide a series of in-services for her principals, and she required them to come. We couldn't require anybody to come. Other assistant superintendents picked up on her idea, and we reached a lot of principals and assistant principals during these in-services.

One assistant superintendent in particular required his principals to have a philosophy of language learning as a basis for their instructional programs. They needed a lot of help, so we worked very closely with them. We worked with them on professional development days, and worked with their teachers on developing their philosophical positions. We provided supper meetings for teachers and consultants to present their research findings at the University Faculty Club. This was particularly important as a vehicle for staff returning from professional study leaves, as it gave them an opportunity to share their research work with each other. Our area provided summer sessions for all levels, including senior high. If we had a well-known person in the district, we would have a mini-conference. It would run on a Friday evening and a Saturday, and we would have teachers presenting on the Saturday. We involved teachers in the workshops, and then our consultants would visit them in their schools to collect student writing samples.

There was one thing that we had that people who work in language arts or in the other curriculum areas downtown don't have now: We had a budget and there was money from the government. At that time we were still being funded for special programs that we had written proposals for. There was a little more money available, and the school board and my directors were always very positive and supportive of everything I proposed. We were successful in doing a lot of these things because we did have some budget to work with. People working as consultants now don't have that.

Often it was individual teachers that we worked with in the classrooms. Sometimes a principal would request help for a teacher for certain reasons; sometimes a teacher would ask you to come out to the school. We were also reacting to requests from the schools and from the Home and School [Alberta Home and School Councils' Association] as well. We spent a lot of time in the evenings. We were always available to go to meetings and provide workshops and meetings with teachers and parents. I enjoyed meeting with the parents at the Home and School meetings.

I think that gives a pretty good overview of the work that we did. It was proactive and it was reactive and covered not just the language arts curriculum, but all subjects and all programs, and it kept us very busy working with the various people. We always had somebody working with Alberta Learning committees, as well, so that we could keep in touch with what was happening and have input. It's really important to have input into the provincial committees and to the provincial programs.

LBB: *When you worked on your Alberta Learning committees, was there an air of cooperation between the province and the districts?*

SUPERVISOR: It was a very cooperative endeavour at the time. We often had the director of curriculum from the province over to speak to the department heads. Sometimes we had the Catholic School department heads and ours together, and the director would talk to us about what was coming up in new programs. He would help in other ways, too. It was a very cooperative project at that time. I'm

not sure that it is as comfortable now as it was then. We really enjoyed working with them, and we felt that they took us seriously, and our concerns and our input to the programs.

LBB: *It was a good partnership.*

SUPERVISOR: It was a very good partnership, as was the partnership with the university and the other urban boards in the province.

LBB: *At the time you were serving as a language arts supervisor in your district, were there supervisors in the other urban boards in the province?*

SUPERVISOR: There were supervisors in all of those boards, and the supervisors from across the province met once a year, usually at Red Deer. We could meet in our subject areas and also listen to speakers, general speakers, and then meet and exchange ideas about what was going on in the different boards. Lethbridge, Red Deer, Edmonton, and Calgary boards sent their supervisors. Now there are no supervisors and this is not happening.

It was good to keep in touch across the province. We were influenced and we had an influence on what was going on in the cities and across the province. We had a vision and we had a budget, as I mentioned. These things were important, at the time, but over time things changed.

Districts decentralized authority, the supervisor of all the programs, and decentralized the budget. It came gradually, a few, two or three, schools to start with, and gradually site-based management started to influence what we were doing downtown. We had to keep track of our time very carefully. There started to be a charge for consultant services, for consultants to go into the schools, and it wasn't a real exchange of money, it was on paper. Consultants had to submit a charge for their services. The idea was that the consultants would, over time, bring in enough money to pay for their salaries. This made a big difference to what was going on. Principals had to pay for teachers to go to workshops, and they became very careful about how they sent teachers off to workshops and about inviting consultants in. Some schools made very good use of our services,

very good use, and some didn't. Principals realized that consulting services was going to cost them money and they had to be careful.

About three years ago, I phoned the head of curriculum and asked him, out of curiosity, what was happening. At that time there were more reading specialists being hired and fewer curriculum consultants. He said it was because of the demand from schools. The demand for reading consultants was greater because they are the ones that can test the students so that they could bring more money into the schools. The students who needed any kind of special help needed to be tested before they could apply for more money. He said he couldn't keep up with the demand for reading specialists.

LBB: *So the motivation for the principals was to make sure that each child came with the maximum amount of dollars available for their particular category?*

SUPERVISOR: Teachers were working hard, and consultants were trying to earn their wages. The focus became very different. Whereas we had worked from a philosophical position on children's language learning and the role of language across all subject areas, the focus now was on management. The focus was on managing the money and their sources and putting the management authority into the hands of the principals. In a lot of cases, I think, it involved trusting that the principals would use that for the benefit of the student and to help the teachers provide the best opportunities for the students. I know some of the principals welcomed the change because it gave them the opportunity to help the teachers become their own authorities. Some principals had a plan. They brought consultants in as they were needed for specific purposes and to work with the teachers, and then the teachers would in-service themselves. The idea was that the teachers would become self-sufficient. I thought this was a wonderful way to go. The principals that went that way focused on in-servicing the teachers and providing time for teachers to in-service themselves. The teachers became their own authorities and did not depend on outside help, as other schools did. Now that doesn't say that every principal could do that. It took a principal with vision

to see what was happening, to look at the children, and look at the program and to help the teachers look across all of the programs and use the resources.

LBB: *For a purpose?*

SUPERVISOR: For a purpose.

LBB: *And, so, if you're managing the "bits" and not the "whole" and you lack a framework, then it is difficult to see the pieces fitting together. If you don't have a philosophy towards learning and if you don't use some of those overarching philosophies or visions at the start, then what do you look for when you manage the part?*

SUPERVISOR: Some principals made cuts that I wonder about. They cut libraries. They cut librarians and put in technicians. Some of them were good, but some of the libraries have gone way downhill. The principals, I noticed, that had the vision maintained the library. The principals that had the vision didn't cut the arts because they were "frills." They kept the music programs; they kept the art programs and the drama programs. They understood that all of those experiences that you provide for children help them develop concepts and they provide opportunities for them to express themselves in various ways.

LBB: *When you look at the new language arts program, when we talk about metacognition are we talking making these connections?*

SUPERVISOR: That's right. That was what was happening in some schools. The people who have the vision, who understand children's learning, these principals are out there doing a very good job. However, there are principals who are inexperienced. The change from the focus on curriculum and working from a philosophy, a consistent philosophy, to management put a lot of focus on the principal and a lot of responsibility. I think there are more differences among the principals now because some of them have the background and have risen to the occasion, surrounded themselves with knowledgeable teachers and are doing very fine work in the schools. At the same time, there are many principals who are bogged down

in the bits and pieces, and they do not know which way to go. They don't have the understanding, and they cannot call in the consultants without paying. Because it costs them money, they do not call on the consultants for support and assistance. So I think the differences from school to school are greater.

LBB: *Perhaps when you worked in your position, there wasn't as great a difference from school to school.*

SUPERVISOR: That's the impression I am getting. It's been years since I have been in the schools and working with teachers, but I am still in touch with some of them. From what I can see and hear, I think that that's probably what is happening.

LBB: *Okay. I'll let you continue unless you have shared with me what you would like to share.*

SUPERVISOR: I have.

LBB: *Then I'd like you to share how as supervisor of language arts you worked with high school English department heads.*

SUPERVISOR: Yes. I was not a high school English teacher. However, I provided them with some opportunities for their own growth. I brought in the people that they felt could help them. I brought in a high school teacher from another urban district. She had presented at a teachers' convention and the teachers loved her, so we brought her to town several times, and we could never find a room big enough. The teachers would be sitting on the floor; they just loved that woman. I also brought in people they didn't know, like James Britton from England. There were others as well, people who were working with high school teachers and trying to get some cooperative work going across the subjects in high school, and that's hard for high schools. We worked on it for several years, and we had some good sessions with social studies and language arts working together and science and language arts. I thought there were some very interesting projects going on. One thing that made a difference to our work was the examinations that came—district exams and provincial exams. The exams made a difference to the program

because the exams were testing what could be examined by paper and pencil in a limited time. So things we would have been working with, like speaking and listening, group work, viewing and presenting, and integration of drama, went beyond the scope of a timed pencil-and-paper examination. It narrowed the curriculum.

LBB: *Could you list some of the initiatives, sessions, or programs that you offered specifically for high school department heads and their department members?*

SUPERVISOR: Certainly. Let me list these for you:

- We provided an L.A. consultant (0.5 FTE), who provided advice and assistance to teachers and administrators.
- One of our three exchanges with the university's Department of Education involved secondary reading. The professor taught an off-campus credit course in reading at one of our high schools. Senior high teachers, as well as university students, attended. The professor was then able to follow up in the schools with the teachers.
- The professor helped us organize a conference just for senior high English teachers, held at the university. Presenters were our own teachers. This facilitated an exchange of ideas among the teachers.
- Once a year we held a joint department head meeting with the Catholic school district. This facilitated an exchange of ideas across the two school districts.
- Invited senior high English teachers from a Catholic district to provide workshops for our teachers. One of the L.A. supervisors in the province was a senior high school educator.
- Organized a series of supper meetings at the University Faculty Club, so teachers returning from study leaves or those who had just finished dissertations could discuss their findings with interested teachers.
- Consultants, department heads, and I worked very hard at interesting senior high teachers of all subjects in the concept of "language across the curriculum." Conference speakers from out of town and out of country

stayed over, and visited schools and talked individually or in small groups with teachers.

- Consultants organized writing conferences for senior high students, involving teachers as session leaders.
- Consultants organized workshops on the assessment of student writing, involving teachers in the presentations.
- Department head meetings involved short business meetings, then focus on curriculum and programs, new materials, new books, and what they were reading, etc.

Hope this helps!

LBB: *Yes, it does—immensely. Were you a part of the hiring process for department heads?*

SUPERVISOR: No, I wasn't part of the hiring process.

LBB: *Do you think, for a position like a high school department head of language arts, the department head needs training beyond the bachelor's degree level?*

SUPERVISOR: Well, I would consider them as the same level as the consultants that I worked with. I encouraged the consultants to complete their master's degrees because I thought it was really important that they have a research background and the expertise to work with teachers.

LBB: *We have talked a lot about curriculum and language instruction as being central to the work of downtown consultants and subject department heads in high schools. There are department heads that see their job as managing the budget, doing the timetable, and ordering the textbooks. The curriculum is the individual responsibility of the teachers. That implies that department heads and their department members teach in a decentralized system, without subject supervisors, where consultants are not necessarily trained in their specific subject areas of*

responsibility and where some department heads do not see their role as that of a curricular leader.

SUPERVISOR: That's all part of the "bits and pieces" thing, the management model. I know now that the consultants are chosen from a pool downtown, whereas before I had definite input into what roles, responsibilities, and training I would expect them to have, and that was very important. If we are going to have consistency and work from a common philosophy, then it is very important.

It seems that the purpose of decentralization would be to give the principals and the teachers and the parents the resources in their own hands to fulfill their vision. What we were doing across the district needs to be done at the school now, and some schools can do it better than others.

LBB: *I wonder if the "knitting" in school organizations isn't working with the students. Regardless of the subject area, we need to ensure we provide a climate, an environment, a way that allows students to learn to the best of their abilities.*

SUPERVISOR: That should be their focus and that should be their vision, their purpose for the management of the money. It's not just providing buses and classrooms and minimum class sizes. All of that is very important, but the questions to focus on are what are we here for, what are the children here for, what is our purpose, and what vision do we have?

LBB: *I don't think you can ever remove competition and various perspectives from organizations, because education is complex and we all come from different ideas of what an education is. However, it is important to have a vision, a shared vision. Then we're moving in some direction, some common direction.*

SUPERVISOR: And then work it through. Educational leaders may be at the point now after the years that they have been working within the decentralized budgeting system with smaller funds, less amounts of money, and a provincial government that hasn't been really supportive; where they can look beyond the management part and pick up on some of the other aspects of education.

LBB: *Would this bring balance to the system?*

SUPERVISOR: Yes, it would. However, I don't think many principals would want to go back, from what I have heard. They like having the autonomy, the budget, the ability to supervise, to hire and do everything. I am sure a lot of them grow with the responsibility. However, I don't think that provides completeness for the district. It doesn't provide an overall opportunity for an overall philosophy or a look across the district. That's what is needed. Each school decides what they will focus on, but maybe there is a role; there used to be a role for something a little broader. For example, when interpreting the provincial curriculum across the district and determining what would be useful to all district teachers at this point because of the new high school English program of studies from the Department of Learning.

I know that some schools are banding together and planning in-services for two or three schools, but for some schools it is just too expensive to do so. I've heard that sometimes external consultants are used because they are less expensive than the consultant from the urban districts in the province. This is unfortunate because an outside consultant does not have the opportunity to provide follow-up and ongoing support. There is lots of research to show that one-shot in-services are not really as effective as something where there is follow-up.

LBB: *What do you consider to be the most effective way of in-servicing teachers?*

SUPERVISOR: Visiting another person's classroom to see what they are doing is one of the most effective ways of in-service, but it requires freeing a teacher to do that, and that's costly.

LBB: *This just about wraps up our time together. Is there anything else you would like to add?*

SUPERVISOR: I think that, you know, teachers are people and they are the same as doctors or lawyers or dentists, or whatever. Some are lifelong learners and some are not. I found, no matter how badly you want to help them, you can't help them unless

they want to be helped. When working with the consultants, we would go with the ones that wanted to learn and do our best with the others.

LBB: *I don't think the human enterprise is perfect.*

SUPERVISOR: No, it isn't, and you cannot go home and lose sleep over it.

LBB: *True! Thank you very much!*

SUPERVISOR: Well, you're most welcome!

Interview Snapshot: Subject Supervisor

At the time site-based management was introduced, subject supervisors were working in the larger school districts. The supervisor interviewed for this study had the help of three full-time equivalent consultants. Their curriculum team was responsible for providing curriculum leadership, advice, and assistance to Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers and administration in language arts. They assumed a proactive consulting role, worked at interpreting the provincial program of studies, and worked with their district's student assessment staff. Because their work was based on solid research and a consistent philosophy about student learning, they were able to build a positive reputation with district teachers and principals. Consultants were selected on the basis of their understanding of students' language learning and the role it played in all the subject areas. Most consultants had or were working on a master's degree and knew what they were doing. The supervisor and her team worked closely with the district's assistant superintendents, school administration, the universities, and Alberta Learning. The professional development they provided was based on networking and needs assessments.

As time went on, site-based management was introduced, and authority and budgets were decentralized. Gradually, site-based management influenced the work of the district subject supervisors and consultants. They needed to keep close track of what they did with their hours and the number of hours spent on each consulting project. Fees were charged for consulting services, although this involved bookkeeping, not a real transfer of dollars. Consultants were eventually expected to bring in enough fees to pay for their salaries. Schools became very conscious about the costs associated with sending their teachers off to workshops and about inviting consultants to work in their schools. Some schools continued to make use of district consultants, and others chose to use their school dollars in other ways. Consultants were hired according to the requests made by schools, not for their subject expertise. For example, the demand grew for reading specialists because they had the skills to test students who needed special help. If special help for the student tested was recommended, more funds would be given to the student's school. This use of consultants brought more money into schools to run school programs. Some schools used consultants for this purpose rather than for providing curriculum support for their teachers. A system that once provided curriculum support based on research and a philosophical position on language learning was now based on consulting to assist site-based managed priorities set independently by each school. This approach assumed that principals had the necessary vision and abilities to use their authority for the benefit of student achievement in their schools. To accomplish this goal, some principals chose to access subject-specific curriculum support, and others did not. Differences in curriculum delivery from school to school began to emerge. As the decentralizing of resources to schools continued, subject-area supervisors in most districts in Alberta were

reclassified as consultants and worked as generalists rather than subject specialists, further weakening the curriculum support and leadership available to principals and their teachers.

Interview With a Former High School Principal

LBB: *What was the initial reason for implementing school-based budgeting?*

PRINCIPAL: SBM [site-based management] provided individual schools with the opportunity to respond to the local needs of the school.

LBB: *Was or how was SBM tied to student achievement?*

PRINCIPAL: The district priorities, ratified by the board of trustees, guided the budgeting process or the allocation of resources. Student achievement was always one of the top priorities. Schools were expected to organize their resources to meet the needs of their school community within the parameters of the district's priorities.

LBB: *What was the role of a subject-area department head in your school?*

PRINCIPAL: I saw the role of the subject-area department head to be to do whatever was necessary to achieve the highest level of student achievement in their department.

LBB: *What should a department head do to achieve this goal?*

PRINCIPAL: The department head should organize the resources at their disposal towards this goal by developing a plan—a plan that evaluates where the department is, where it needs to be (achievement-wise), and how this goal will be realized. As well, the department head should be responsible for monitoring the teaching staff, being aware of department member performance, and assessing progress in these areas. These should be the tasks of a department head working on improving students' achievement in their department.

LBB: *Who was responsible for the supervision of department heads in your school? What criteria or evaluation tools were used to monitor and evaluate their performance?*

PRINCIPAL: The assistant principals were, but the entire leadership team, which obviously I was a part of, shared the responsibility. Reviewing their department's results on the standardized tests set by the province served as the main evaluation of their performance. This is pertinent since your work is related to English departments. The evaluation of department heads in subject areas like career and technology services (CTS), where standardized tests are not written, was different. There was some comparison of department heads to each other, but not across the curriculum. English results were compared to social studies, but probably not to mathematics, physics, or CTS. As well, I monitored their contribution on faculty council, their presentations at the district's annual results review, and their participation in professional development activities like the marking of diploma examinations. The district did not have a roles and responsibilities statement to use when hiring department heads.

LBB: *What are the essential characteristics you looked for in your department heads?*

PRINCIPAL: I believed the key to being a good administrator was the selection of the best staff possible. It was not necessary that the department head was the best teacher in their department, but it was essential that they had the ability/capacity to make the teachers in their department the best teachers that they could be. Staff development was a huge part of the role of the department head.

LBB: *Where in the district did a department head go to receive an education/ professional development that would improve their ability to lead in their work as a curricular leader?*

PRINCIPAL: The department heads relied on their own initiatives for training and professional development through conferences, committee work, academic studies, support from other leadership staff in their schools, in particular their

immediate supervisors, networking with other department heads, and (for the very confident department head) the input of their department members.

LBB: *Were there district staff that had the expertise necessary to assist department heads in improving their abilities as a department head?*

PRINCIPAL: Not directly. Our subject-area consultants were very involved with assisting with the overarching district initiatives, not leaving very much time available for working with department heads to improve their abilities as curricular leaders.

LBB: *Is it important for department heads to be curricular leaders?*

PRINCIPAL: Our schools no longer force a rigid curriculum on students, but work towards meeting the needs of individual students. A curriculum expert that did not put the student at the centre of their teaching was not doing the job expected of them.

LBB: *Given your preceding statement, do you believe that a department head who is not a curriculum expert can be capable of functioning as a curricular leader and, in doing so, be able to diagnose the need for, plan, deliver, and assess instruction that will improve the student achievement results in their department?*

PRINCIPAL: Curriculum expertise is not enough. How the department head works with their department members, their school leadership, and within the district as a leader is more important than being a curricular leader.

LBB: *Were there other formal mechanisms/instruments in place to assess the work of a department head as a curricular leader other than their department's performance/results on standardized assessments written by the students who studied in their departments?*

PRINCIPAL: No, we had no other formal measurement sticks that we used for this purpose. Nor was there set education requirements, a roles and responsibilities statement, a formal professional development program(s), or standardized evaluation instruments/processes in place in my school or the district that assisted in the

hiring, ongoing professional development, monitoring, and evaluation of department heads in their work as curricular leaders in their departments.

LBB: *Thank you for providing a picture of your expectations for department heads in your school.*

Interview Snapshot: High School Principal

The principal interviewed believed that the job of the subject department head in his secondary school was to do what was necessary to achieve the highest level of student achievement possible in the department. To accomplish this goal, the department head was expected to develop a plan and organize the resources at his or her disposal. The plan was to include monitoring the department teaching staff, being aware of department member performance, and engaging in ongoing monitoring and assessment of progress in meeting the goals established in the department plan. No district roles and responsibilities statement for secondary subject department heads was available for the principal to use when hiring or evaluating department heads.

The principal did not believe that the primary role of the department head was to serve as a curriculum leader in the department, because working to meet the needs of individual students had become the focus in schools, not forcing a rigid curriculum on students. Therefore, a department head needed to be more than a curriculum expert. He or she needed to be a good administrator and be able to focus on other aspects of the job to carry out the roles and responsibilities the principal expected of subject department heads working in his school. The principal monitored and assessed department head performance according to student achievement results and the department head's contribution to faculty council meetings, presentations at district results review meetings,

and participation in professional development activities, such as marking diploma examinations.

The department head was expected to take initiative in his or her training and professional development through conferences, committee work, academic studies, support from other leadership staff in the school, in particular his or her immediate supervisor, networking with other department heads, and (for the very confident department head) input from his or her department members. When asked if department heads were able to call upon district subject-area consultants for assistance with curriculum matters, the principal replied that they were not able to directly because subject-area consultants were involved with work associated with overarching district initiatives, leaving them with little time to work with department heads in regard to their curriculum concerns or to assist them in improving their abilities as curriculum leaders.

Observations About Site-Based Management and Curriculum Leadership

The interviews in this chapter present the interview participants' perspectives on site-based management and its impact on curriculum implementation and curriculum leadership. These snapshots provide an understanding from different leadership positions in Alberta school districts about the place made for curriculum leadership in a site-based managed school district, the changes to the roles and responsibilities of district staff as a result of school-based-management, and the curriculum leadership role available for subject department heads in large, urban, site-based managed high schools. The interviews are particular to specific school districts in Alberta and are not meant to represent the views of all educational leaders about curriculum leadership in site-based managed school districts. Instead, readers are provided with the experiences of three

educational leaders to deepen their understanding of curriculum leadership and site-based management in ways that can inform and support their work as site-based managed curriculum leaders in their schools and inside and outside their districts.

The associate superintendent interviewed provided the perspective of the senior leader who served as a change agent responsible for implementing site-based management in an Alberta school district. He provided a clear picture of the place shaped for curriculum implementation and curriculum leaders in his site-based managed school district. Site-based management became the *how,* or the management vehicle, and curriculum implementation became the *what,* or the organization's purpose or mission. Curriculum was to be implemented in ways that ensured the highest levels of student achievement possible. In his site-based managed district, a place was available for the subject department head to take on the roles and responsibilities of a curriculum leader with department members, within the school, and inside and outside the district. He said,

> In schools, there needs to be line authority from the teacher to the department head, to assistant principal, and then the principal. Someone in the line must have the expertise and ensure that the delivery of the curriculum through classroom instruction is as it should be. And if this is not the case, they [the teachers] will starve. It is important that the department head function as the in-house consultant expert/leader, or the teachers' instruction will starve!

The subject supervisor provided the perspective of an educational leader whose roles and responsibilities were changed by the implementation of site-based management. Subject supervisors no longer had a budget, nor did they retain the responsibility for implementing the subject curriculum district-wide. Over time, their title was changed from subject supervisor to consultant. Subject supervisors lost organizational power as site-based decision-making was implemented. School principals, responsible for deciding which consulting services their schools would pay for, used consultants for assistance

with initiatives other than subject-specific initiatives, and consultants became generalists working on a variety of district initiatives, making them less available to serve as curriculum leaders to school personnel. Responsibility for curriculum leadership was delegated to the schools and became the responsibility of school principals. The subject supervisor interviewed raised important questions about the decentralization of curriculum leadership to school principals. First, did principals have a vision or a philosophy about language arts instruction? If not, would decisions be disconnected or would curriculum support be delivered in bits and pieces? What qualities, aptitudes, and education does the principal require to be up to the challenge of serving as a manager and curriculum leader in the school? Should there be an overarching approach to curriculum implementation in site-based managed districts to assist principals with their work as curriculum leaders? Should some district consultants be hired for their subject-area expertise to promote a common approach to curriculum knowledge and leadership? These questions are outside the parameters of this study but nevertheless are questions that arise when thinking about the provision of curriculum leadership in site-based managed schools.

The principal interviewed believed that the subject department heads in his school needed to be more than curriculum leaders. What he valued in a subject department head was an educator that could represent the school at district meetings and meetings outside the district, select excellent staff, monitor the teaching and learning occurring in the department, and develop a plan using the resources allocated to the department to meet individual student needs in ways that promoted the highest levels of student achievement possible for every student in every department in the school. The question that arises is,

What would be the *what* for achieving the highest level of achievement for each student? Is it the learning of the subject-specific curriculum taught by teachers? Curriculum is what teachers teach and students learn. Even in an outcomes-based learning environment, how well students learn the curriculum or what they are taught determines how high their levels of student achievement will be. If curriculum is the *what* of schools, who is responsible for curriculum implementation and curriculum leadership in site-based managed schools? It should be a responsibility shared by the school principal, assistant principals, department heads, and teachers. Given the size of large urban high schools, it is unlikely that a principal or an assistant principal will have the expertise or the time to provide consistent and ongoing curriculum leadership for every teacher in every department. Therefore, the roles and responsibilities associated with curriculum implementation and curriculum leadership in large urban site-based managed districts could be delegated by the school principal to the subject department heads, who are best situated in the organization's line of authority to provide department teachers with curriculum leadership.

From digesting the thoughts, opinions, and ideas taken from the interviews with three educational leaders who held various positions in Alberta school districts, I gained a picture of the role of subject department heads in urban site-based managed school districts. Subject department heads no longer have the support of expert subject consultants at the district level. The roles and responsibilities assigned to secondary subject department heads are determined by the principal's educational vision for the school. Therefore, not all department heads are expected to serve as curriculum leaders. There were no set performance-evaluation systems and no set qualifications for

secondary department heads in the districts in which the three interviews were conducted. The only standard criterion for the department head's role was the review of student performance on standardized achievement tests mandated by Alberta Learning.

The variation from school to school and district to district in how the roles and responsibilities of secondary subject department heads are perceived in site-based managed school districts makes it difficult to generalize about the role of department heads within a district and throughout Alberta. This variation supports the use of case-study research to develop a picture of the role of the English department head as a curriculum leader serving as a curriculum-change agent in the implementation of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies. Case-study research makes it possible to develop a picture of department heads who work as curriculum-change agents from the perspectives of the department head, their department members, and their supervisors. Therefore, this study has the potential to inform similar practitioners in other site-based managed school districts. In doing so, this research can contribute to the knowledge of educational leaders, in particular department heads, about how their work as curriculum-change agents can contribute to curriculum implementation and curriculum leadership and, in doing so, improve student achievement in their departments, schools, and school districts.

Strategies and Approaches for Curriculum Leadership Available to Subject Department Heads in Site-Based Managed School Districts

School-based or site-based managed school districts are a given in Alberta. The merits of this practice in Alberta school districts are not the focus of this study. However, an understanding of school-based management and the place of curriculum leadership in

this management system is important because it provides insight into the provincial, district, and school culture within which the department heads work. In particular, it provides the culture, climate, and context the department heads in this study worked in as curriculum leaders working as curriculum-change agents. If department heads are expected to serve as curriculum leaders, another important question that arises is, Who will assist subject department heads in their work as curriculum leaders? This question, which arises in the site-based managed districts in which I did my research, is beyond the parameters of this study. However, strategies that department heads can use to assist them with their work as curriculum leaders are within the parameters of this study and are germane to the understanding of department heads who serve as curriculum-change agents and curriculum leaders in their departments. This section provides such strategies and approaches. The research work included supports my experiences as a department head who served as a curriculum-change agent and curriculum leader, but most importantly, it is based on research that supports the strategies for curriculum leadership employed by this study's department head case-study participants. The change strategies that follow have been drawn from the research work of Black (1983), Fullan (2001, 2002), Reeves (2004), and Stevenson (1995).

Change Strategies Philosophy or Vision of English Instruction: Moral Purpose

Before department heads work with teachers on curriculum, I believe that it is important that work be done in schools to articulate a belief or philosophy of English instruction based on sound theory that can be translated into practice at the classroom level. Fullan (2002) calls this moral purpose; another way of phrasing it is vision. Providing professional development time for the English department to develop a vision

of English instruction in the classroom is an important first step in preparing teachers to accept the newest program of studies.

Stevenson (1995) believes that teachers must have a philosophical position, a belief, or a vision of how English instruction in their classrooms should happen in order to have ownership of their teaching. Therefore, a department head working as a curriculum leader in the department must provide professional development and support that allows the teachers in the department to engage in the change process associated with curriculum change. This process allows for change that creates ownership of the curriculum by the teachers in their classrooms, the department, and the school. During a change process, people go back and forth between attitude affecting behaviour and behaviour affecting attitude; facilitators of change must realize that both areas should be addressed (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991; Stevenson, 1995; Reeves, 2004).

Teacher Support Networks

A variety of networks can be developed to assist with curriculum leadership. Networks or groups can be provided within departments to help teachers work together and support each other through the change process. For example, at weekly brown-bag lunch meetings, all English 10-1 teachers can share the changes they have made to existing teaching units to align them with the requirements of the newest program of studies. Another idea is supper meetings to share research teachers have compiled while on study leave. Through the exchange of ideas and the support provided by the groups, the changes required will be easier than if attempted in isolation.

On-line information networks can be developed that include the department head's immediate supervisor (the assistant principal) and, preferably, the principal. This

allows the department head's supervisors to develop an understanding of the new curriculum and the support required from the school's leadership staff to successfully implement the new program in the school.

Information networks can be provided to share current articles on language arts research and practice. These articles should be sought out and shared with all key members of the school involved with the school's language program. This will help to keep the school's leadership staff abreast of current thinking in English language arts and the support required for keeping current. Teachers will become more informed about the new program.

Networks outside a department and school can be developed by having teachers participate in marking exams that have been changed to meet the new requirements. This could involve marking committees in schools, the district, and the province.

Department Head Networks

Networks (Black, 1983) for department heads are desirable within a department, a school, and a district and outside of a school district for information sharing, understanding, and eventually support for curriculum change. The following networks can assist department heads with curriculum implementation:

- Information networks with the district's curriculum director, language arts consultant, other department heads in the district, staff at the learning ministry involved with the curriculum changes, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) specialist council, and other contacts in the province's language arts community to provide knowledge about the new curriculum

- Special workshops and information sessions arranged by the department head, the district, or the province, which teachers and department heads attend to become acquainted with the new curriculum

Staff Exchanges

Peer observations or classroom visitations among teachers in a school or between schools in a specific subject area can be very useful in promoting curriculum change. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- Teachers could observe excellent practices in a colleague's classes and model these practices in their own classrooms.
- Department heads could visit or shadow other department heads to see how they work with the teachers in their departments to implement curriculum.
- Department heads could participate in secondments to Alberta Learning or other organizations outside the district, such as the University of Alberta as a practicum associate, and bring this information back to their departments.

Department Handbooks

Putting the philosophies, practices, and ways of implementing the program of studies in writing can help rebuild continuity of instruction from classroom to classroom in a department.

Developing a department handbook based on the department's philosophy is an excellent vehicle for this approach. The handbook should be developed by committees

struck within the department and should serve as a guide for the principal, the department head, and the teachers to how the program of studies is implemented in the department. It could include a copy of the newest program of studies; the department's philosophy and/or policy toward English instruction; descriptions of each course (with detailed explanations as required); assessment tools used at each grade level; a list of texts available for each course; a list of media resources; programs of study designed locally and developed for department use; and a where-to-find guide for exam storage, teacher texts, and so on. Once the handbook is in place, a review for advice and assistance could be requested from an external consultant, and committees within the department should be struck to ensure that the handbook is updated yearly.

Professional Development of Department Heads

Department heads must be selected very carefully (Brown, 1993). In a site-based management environment in a large urban high school English department, the role of curriculum implementation is delegated to the subject department head. The selection of a department head, like that of a subject-area consultant, must be based on his or her background in language and English studies, successful teaching experiences, a capacity to work well with others both in proactive and reactive roles, and well-developed research skills honed from academic studies at the master's or even the doctoral level. Learning how to be a department head, in-school consultant, or curriculum-change agent will occur through on-the-job experiences. However, the background the department head brings to these experiences will determine what he or she will learn on the job and, in turn, how effective he or she will be in the role of curriculum-change agent. Good communication skills and the ability to represent the department at the school, district,

and provincial levels of the education community are essential, too, but these skills are hollow and futile if knowledge of what to communicate is absent.

Strategies Snapshot

The preceding sections are not an all-inclusive presentation of the strategies available for department heads to use when working with the teachers in their departments to implement the program of studies. They do, however, address the need for an overarching vision or philosophy for curriculum leadership and provide a solid sample, drawn from the research literature available, of the strategies available to department heads when serving as curriculum leaders working as curriculum-change agents.

CHAPTER 5
THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT HEAD AS CURRICULUM-CHANGE AGENT: TWO CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Two households both alike in dignity . . . where we lay our scene.

—Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet,* Act I, Prologue

The two case studies that follow describe the role of the English department heads from Irma High School and Holden High School. After I collected the initial data at Irma High School, the extensive literature review was completed. When the case study at Holden High School was undertaken, time had passed in the implementation cycle. As a result these two case studies show the pre-implementation stage and the implementation stage. This provides a greater picture of the work of English department heads as curriculum-change agents. Both English departments are located in urban site-based managed school districts in Alberta.

Irma High School is part of a large urban district. At the time of my data collection, the school's population was between 1,500 and 2,000 students, with a teaching staff of 93. The school opened in the 1950s and in its early years was strictly an academic high school. Over the decades, its student population has become more varied. The student population today is economically and culturally diverse and includes students classified as regular, mild special needs, moderate special needs, and severe special needs. However, Irma High School has maintained its reputation as an academic school that draws motivated students from throughout its district. Its program offerings include the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, an international languages program, a fine arts program that includes music and drama, a community living skills program, and

career and technology studies. The principal of Irma High School at the time of my research was a strong advocate for and supporter of academic rigour throughout his school. This support was reflected in consistently high levels of student achievement over the long term, as measured by students' results on Alberta Learning diploma exams.

Holden High School, which opened in the 1960s, is also located in a large urban site-based managed district in Alberta. The school's population at the time of the data collection was approximately 1,600 students, with a teaching staff of 65. Its student population includes students classified as regular, mild special needs, moderate special needs, and severe special needs. Compared with Irma's student population, a greater percentage of Holden's student population is classified as special needs. Holden has a reputation as an academically oriented high school that draws students who want to enrol in its International Baccalaureate program. In addition to the International Baccalaureate program, the school offers an international languages program, a community living skills program, and career and technology studies. Holden High School describes its student population as middle to lower class with a significant cultural mix that includes a high number of Asian ethnic groups. The school's principal was described by participants as a strong supporter of academic rigour in his school. This rigour was reflected in Holden's students' consistently high levels of student achievement over the long term, as measured by their results on the Alberta Learning diploma examinations.

I interviewed the English department head at Irma High School prior to mandatory implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies (Alberta Learning, 2003), whereas Holden High School's English department head was interviewed during mandatory implementation. Therefore, the Irma case study is

provided first and is briefer because fewer implementation activities were under way in the English department at the time. The case study of Holden's English department head is more extensive because the interview and resulting data collection occurred when the entire department was immersed in the implementation process. Both case studies provide detailed description, including demographic details, a description of the school environment and where the interviews took place, the professional backgrounds of the department heads, how the department heads define their role as curriculum-change agents, and snapshots of the department heads as curriculum-change agents.

Irma High School: Melody's Case Study

Meeting Melody, Irma's English Department Head

It is springtime when I make my way into Irma High School to interview Melody. I have to find an entrance other than the one nearest the gym because that door to the school has been blocked off to maintain a quiet buffer around the gym, where the International Baccalaureate exams are being written throughout May. As I reroute through a north-facing door closer to the centre of the school, several students without a last-block class are leaving for the day. I enter the door, turn right, and proceed down the older, clean hallway toward the general office, located on the left side of the hallway near the school's front entrance. I open the door and enter a not too newly renovated office not unlike the main office of any other high school. Vertical blinds cover the windows, and several secretaries sit at desks in the main part of the office, behind a high portable divider that separates office visitors from the office staff. I wait my turn at the counter while the receptionist completes a phone call. Then, when my turn comes, I share with her that I am in the school to meet with Melody, Irma's English department head.

The secretary calls Melody to let her know that I have arrived and asks me to sit down and wait for Melody to collect me. This is the area where I interviewed Melody's supervisor, an assistant principal, several weeks ago.

Sitting in the office waiting for Melody gives me the opportunity to observe the daily rhythms of the office by watching the transactions taking place. Students come in to make appointments to meet with their grade coordinators, parents call in with messages for their children, and teachers greet each other and interact with the office staff en route to check their mailboxes for the last time today. The office has a cheerful bustle about it and runs smoothly under the watchful eye of the head secretary with the cropped haircut and the demeanour of the seasoned school secretary. The school climate is friendly, busy, organized, and businesslike.

After about 10 minutes, Melody opens the door to the office and walks in. First she greets the receptionist; then she turns to me and says hello. Soon after our introduction, she marshals me out the main office door, down the hallway to the left, past the trophy cabinets, up a stairwell on the right, and into her office on the second floor, adjacent to the hallway where the English classes are situated. I interviewed one of the teachers in this hallway. Melody asks me to wait in her office while she calls her husband. Her office is sparsely furnished with a bookshelf, a filing cabinet, and a telephone, and a computer sits on a table beside her desk. Light pours in from the windows that overlook one of the school's parking lots. The office feels functional, quiet, and inviting with the after-school sun coming through the windows.

After calling her husband, Melody picks up her personal effects and guides me back down the stairwell to the English workroom on the main floor. The room has

recently been refurbished. It is painted a soft pastel colour, and venetian blinds similar to those hanging in the office cover the windows. The kitchen, unlike many school kitchens I have visited, is spotless. Melody and I sit on the newer cloth couch in the workroom meeting area. This area in the late afternoon is a quiet, comfortable spot in which to conduct the interview. Although there are a few interruptions from teachers wanting coffee and from the cleaning lady, overall the tape recorder runs without interruption.

Melody and I communicate well throughout the interview. Melody has a reserve about her, a dry wit, and a desire to participate that makes it easy for me to interview her and feel free to ask the questions I want to ask. It is clear to me throughout the interview that Melody is accustomed to sharing her ideas about her role as a curriculum-change agent.

Melody has a pragmatic personality. She is quiet and intelligent. Her height and her reserved nature create an aura, which all the staff interviewed will comment on. It is an aura of dignity, common sense, and solid leadership—leadership based on years of experience as a teacher and an English department head. Her work as a curriculum leader is a major part of her life but not her sole preoccupation. She is involved with her husband, her children, and her community, and she loves to go to the opera. My first reaction is that Melody is an educator and a human being whom I would trust to educate my own children.

Melody tells me that her first jobs were in the recreation community and that she has no degrees past the bachelor's degree in education. However, she participates in many in-service sessions and attends lectures, meetings, and on-the-job training. She explains that she has taught at Irma High School for over 15 years and has served as

department head for 9 of those years. She has taught every course available in her department, from English Language Arts 10-2, the diploma English course, to 30-1-IB, an honours English course.

Melody's Views of Her Work

When asked how she understood the role of the English department head, Melody answered without hesitation. She believed that the department head's role is to make sure that the curriculum is being met and that the children are being taught as promised by Alberta Learning and the professionals. She went on to say that the bottom line is to make sure that the curriculum is delivered to each student in the department at the appropriate level and in an appropriate manner and to make sure that all people in the department are fulfilling their professional obligations. She stressed that it is important for the department head to represent the English department, not only in the school but also in the community and with other educational organizations. Her personal goal had always been to make her English department the strongest in the system in terms of teaching abilities and professional abilities. She felt that her main priority as a curriculum leader was to aid the improvement process of department members in implementing the new curriculum by expanding teacher knowledge of the newest program of studies, to provide implementation resources to teachers, and to develop products as required for implementation.

When asked to describe her style as a curriculum leader using the survey instrument (see Appendix E), Melody selected the descriptors *facilitator, intuitive,* and *low key.* She felt that the general skills she relied on to do her work included listening, interpersonal ease, and the ability to take things with a grain of salt, as well as initiative

taking, confidence building, managing, and collaboration. To achieve curriculum implementation, the strategies Melody most often used were collaborative problem solving, supported planning, and monitoring and evaluating the teachers in her department. Melody believed that the outcomes of her work improved student achievement. As well, her work helped develop a more positive school climate and resulted in a higher level of student satisfaction.

Other Participants' Views of Melody's Work

Melody was often called on by the school's leadership team to provide input into issues, concerns, and projects at Irma High School. As well, her input was valued at the school's faculty council meetings, attended by department heads, assistant principals, the school's business manager, the head secretary, and the principal.

Overall, the teachers in the English department viewed Melody as she viewed herself. They saw her as a curriculum-change agent. One teacher made the following comment about Melody's work as a change agent:

> She's encouraging, very positive and supportive and empowering. . . . She has this aura. She has this power. . . . She's got presence. . . . When Melody talks, you listen. And she doesn't demand that you listen, but you just want to listen. I think she's incredibly intuitive about certain things, like the way people feel. I think she has great energy and patience. I wouldn't, you know, be as patient. Her strengths are her knowledge of the curriculum and her ability to work with others. She's objective, fair, and she consults with her staff before making decisions that affect them.

Researcher's Views of Melody's Work

Melody functioned as a curriculum leader at Irma High School. The members of her English department and her supervisor viewed her ways of working as a curriculum leader in the same way she did. She had their respect, and she had a presence that made

her appear to be a leader. All her work focused on every child who walked into her school, because they all had to take English. She said, "I want every student who has registered in an English course at Irma High School to be well taught and satisfied with their English class experience." She went on to say, "The strength of the English department is, in a way, a lighthouse department in the school."

Irma High School chose to begin implementing the newest English language arts program of studies prior to ministerial approval and Alberta Learning's mandatory implementation deadlines. Therefore, Melody worked as a proactive change agent in the pre-mandatory implementation phase.

At the time of the data collection at Irma High School, Melody's English department was in its third year of participating in a district initiative called the Quick Start Project. This project provided Irma's English department with curriculum-implementation support that was not available to all English departments in the province. Melody used the monies made available by the Quick Start Project to work with other department heads, district consultants, and Alberta Learning to support her implementation of the program of studies. This is an excellent example of how district-initiated projects, such as the Quick Start Project, can support the work of subject-area department heads as change agents by providing support, training, modelling, and coaching for department staff.

The teacher participants at Irma High School, Melody's immediate supervisor (the assistant principal), and Melody herself provided information about Melody's work as a curriculum-change agent and the English department's involvement with the Quick Start Project. The assistant principal developed a clear picture of Irma's participation:

> Irma High School began to look at ways to participate in Quick Start as soon as the superintendent called for schools to join the project by developing incredible results and large improvement in diploma subjects in a short period of time. Irma did this by looking at possible ways of addressing curriculum in regards to how they could improve results. First they looked at timetabling and allowed for a collaborative-planning period. Then they also looked at creating courses, let's say an English class or a mathematics class, that would allow them to group students by ability. Then they took students achieving between 50 per cent and 60 per cent and supplemented their course material. In other words, these students were provided with a three-credit section of time above their five-credit course in order to assist them in succeeding in their courses and achieving improved results on their diploma examinations. The idea was 100 per cent success for all the students. It became their mandate during the three-year project that 100 per cent of the students would achieve the acceptable standard of 50 per cent or better on their diploma examinations.

The Quick Start Project also involved partnerships with other high schools, especially other Quick Start high schools, in the district. This allowed Irma's staff to glean knowledge and strategies that had been successful from other schools and other teachers. The staff members then attempted to implement what they had learned. The assistant principal believed that participating in the project had benefited Irma's teachers.

Irma's teaching staff participated in district-wide professional development, with all English department members in particular coming together and sharing information. There was collaboration between schools. For example, Irma formed a partnership with Mission Park High School and shared ways to improve student achievement. At the time of the interview, Melody and the English department head at Mission Park were continuing to share information.

Melody, within her English department, worked on curriculum alignment and used central services staff to assist in aligning the curricula of English Language Arts

10-1, the university-entrance Grade 10 English course stream, and English Language Arts 10-2, the diploma Grade 10 English course stream. As well, the 10-1 and 10-2 English course alignment became a focus for all members of the department.

The assistant principal also provided insight into how the Quick Start Project helped the English department decide how to work toward implementing the newest program of studies:

> With the collaborative plan we have in place with Mission Park High School, I would think that the department heads get together and would talk about how they see implementation working, and then either share those ideas and then bring them back to their schools for implementation in ways appropriate for their departments. Sometimes when we talk about implementation, it is when you pilot a new course, and then there is a lead teacher in our school to help others implement after the pilot is completed. The department head is right there alongside the lead teacher to assist on ideas.

I then asked him to explain how his school would use a lead teacher. He indicated that the lead teachers were selected by Melody and that he believed that a lead teacher would be someone who takes time to peruse the curriculum and to attend professional development sessions or any in-service sessions Alberta Learning provides. Lead teachers should be the ones to provide criticism or feedback to Alberta Learning about the program before it becomes the official curriculum. As well, he believed that having lead teachers who take the opportunity to field test or pilot a new curriculum gives the school's students an advantage. It also allows staff to prepare for what is coming.

The assistant principal provided a clear picture of Irma's involvement in the Quick Start Project. The project gave Melody the opportunity to use several change-agent strategies to begin to implement the newest program of studies before mandatory implementation. Melody ensured that she and the English department staff participated in training, workshops, and professional development activities at the district and provincial

levels. They also had the opportunity to demonstrate program knowledge and technical expertise by contributing to the school's curriculum-alignment process initiative and by providing input into Alberta Learning drafts of the newest program of studies. This built trust, rapport, and collaboration within the department and with other high school English departments during the meetings organized to discuss curriculum implementation under the funding umbrella of the Quick Start Project.

Melody's supervisor was very involved, because of the Quick Start Project, in curriculum initiatives and leadership in his school, particularly in the English department. The climate created by the school's principal fostered and supported the assistant principal's work as a curriculum leader. The principal, in his role of curriculum leader, supported Melody's work as a curriculum-change agent in the English department. The school's leadership team was focused on improving student achievement through the curriculum-alignment process. Melody's interviews provided me with insight into how she used this supportive school climate to work as a curriculum-change agent. When I asked Melody to provide ways in which the teachers in her department had been involved in the implementation of the newest program of studies, she replied,

> We do a lot of group planning. This year, we didn't do as much as we have done in the past. For the last two years, we have been involved in the curriculum-alignment process, and I think that is an important part of curriculum implementation. Often, in meetings, we'll spend the last part of the meeting having someone model the teaching of certain short stories. When new teachers come into our department, they're attached to a teacher who's been here for a while to assist them with implementing the curriculum. Teachers are often collaborating informally and sharing materials. We've built a lot of materials together. People are constantly encouraged to go to professional development activities from this school and from this department—and they do. This adds to information and content available in the department. I think, especially over the last two or three years, we've become far more tuned to the curriculum expectations. I think this has been more of a district focus, and with our

department focusing on the curriculum-alignment process, we have tuned in and focused on curriculum outcomes.

The two English teachers I interviewed supported what Melody and her supervisor had shared about the department's efforts to implement the newest program of studies. They talked about how department members had represented the school in every district and provincial focus group and almost every discussion group. As well, they had been reading each draft of the proposed program of studies since Alberta Learning had released the first draft. They had taken a strong interest in the new program. Initially, everybody was upset about a new aspect of the curriculum—the representation strand—until a link was made with their computer-based units. The department had been doing computer-based work regularly, in every course and at every level, for three or four years. They realized that a lot of the work the new curriculum called "representing" had been happening as part of the computer-based units. After the teachers realized that this aspect of the curriculum had been evolving over the last 20 years, their distrust of the new curriculum and its representing strand evaporated.

Holden High School: Sharon's Case Study

Meeting Sharon, Holden's English Department Head

It is the end of winter, or nearly the end of winter, as I park my car in front of Holden High School, change into my slip-on shoes, collect my interview materials, and set off toward the main entrance of the school. A yellow school bus near the entrance is dropping off students, probably from a field trip, and several of those students are walking into the school at the same time as I am. There is still snow on the ground, and it is slushy and sticky, so I make sure to wipe my shoes thoroughly before turning left and

then left again and then into the general office. I was here several weeks ago, when I came to interview Sharon's supervisor (an assistant principal) and one of the teachers who has agreed to participate in the study. The office has the same busy, bustling atmosphere that it had on my previous visit. I introduce myself to the receptionist and let her know that I am in the school to meet with the English department head, Sharon. I sit in the office waiting area while the receptionist lets Sharon know that I have arrived. Once the receptionist contacts Sharon, she lets me know that it will be several minutes before Sharon can collect me. I sit in the office and wait.

Holden's office is rectangular and has not been refurbished recently. It is not an overly large office and, because of its shape, the natural light is limited to a narrow bank of windows at the back. The receptionist at the tall main counter is personable and efficient. While I wait, several students come into the office. One student comes in to pick up a message from a parent, a second uses the office telephone to let her employer know that she will miss work today for a dentist appointment, and a third student comes in to meet with her grade coordinator. The climate in the office is easygoing, efficient, and businesslike. At times it feels crowded, because the public space is small and narrow.

Sharon arrives and greets me warmly. She apologizes for keeping me waiting and explains that she has been meeting with a department member about a unit the teacher is developing. She invites me to go with her to the school's English wing, where I can interview her. On the way to the stairwell to the right of the main office, one of the assistant principals stops Sharon to discuss a student. Sharon says that she wants to give the student another chance rather than have the student removed from her class. The

administrator says that it is fine with him if the student remains and that he believes that Sharon is doing the student a huge favour.

After this exchange, we scurry up the stairs and head for the English workroom. Unfortunately, there are teachers working in the room, so Sharon suggests that we try the school library. When we arrive in the library, it is full of students, so we head off to the International Baccalaureate coordinator's office, which is available. En route to the office, Sharon explains to me that all the classrooms are in use because the school is filled to capacity throughout the entire school day. After our whirlwind hallway tour, we settle into the office. This space, like the general office and the hallways, is clean and tidy but in need of a new coat of paint and an updated decor. It is adjacent to a classroom with piles of paper strewn about and two wooden desks crammed into it. I place my tape recorder on the desk near Sharon, and I sit with pen in hand beside the desk next to her papers. It takes us a few minutes to settle in, and I begin the interview as fast as possible because Sharon has another appointment right after ours.

Sharon is a tall woman who moves quickly and efficiently through the school hallways. She is not shy, expresses herself readily, and has very definite attitudes, especially about her work. It does not take much time with her to realize that her work as a teacher and department head is her life's work. It is her passion. She shares with me that she gives up her personal life throughout the school year to maintain excellence in her professional life. Sharon says that it is impossible for her to stand in front of her students and do anything less than her personal best, for fear she could harm their learning in any way. It is a sacrifice she makes without hesitation. She says that she realizes that others cannot or choose not to commit their energy to teaching like she does,

and she tries to keep this in mind when serving as their department head. My first impression of Sharon is that she is an extraordinary educator.

Sharon tells me that she has worked in the education community for her entire adult life and that she started her first degree when she finished high school. She completed a bachelor of education degree with a double major in French and English. Her first teaching position was with a rural school board, where she taught French and junior high language arts. She also taught with an urban Catholic school board, Edmonton Public Schools' Continuing Education (now Metro Continuing Education), Alberta Education's Correspondence Branch (now the Alberta Distance Learning Centre), and an urban public school board.

Sharon offers me further insight into her teaching history, explaining that while teaching in a variety of districts and living in a variety of locations, she continued to take English courses and eventually returned to university, where she completed a master's degree in the Department of Secondary Education. Sharon has been at this school for the past 15 years and has served as the school's English department head for the last 5 years. She has taught all the courses in her English department and has been teaching in the International Baccalaureate program since she arrived at Holden High School.

Sharon's Views of Her Work

When asked how she understood the role of the English department head, Sharon replied,

> Well . . . I would not want to work in a department where I didn't have a department head. I do so much as a department head, the purchasing of books and the finding of resources . . . the sort of paperwork that needs to be done. And, you know, that whole sense of collaboration, like the bringing together of people in a

> belief that collaboration is important—I think it's really done by the department head. Retreats, for example, are not the responsibility of the teachers.
>
> We are in a service industry in the sense that I absolutely am doing something of service with these kids. And you know what? My kids know it, and they respect that and they love me for that. And they know how much time and effort I put into the job that I do, and that's because I do see it as service. What else can you see it as?

Sharon listed her main priority as a curriculum-change agent as expanding the knowledge of the students in her English department. Her second priority was aiding the improvement process (achievement and results) in her department. Third was aiding in the development of products (units and lesson plans). Fourth was bringing resources (textbooks) to students and teachers. Another priority for Sharon was completing the administrative tasks associated with the role of the department head. She described her leadership style as "facilitative, collegial, collaborative, and supportive." The skills Sharon considered essential to the way she worked included listening, reading, and making the department function. She felt that she provided her staff with support, trust, and rapport building and was a provider of resources. Sharon also believed that, in her role as a curriculum leader, she had developed a teacher-support structure in her department that provided emotional support and support for the curriculum-implementation process. Sharon felt that the outcomes in curriculum development that had been realized as a result of her work as a curriculum leader included the use of new products, improved student achievement, and a more positive or improved climate in Holden's English department (see Appendix C).

When I interviewed her, Sharon described her work of that day. She indicated that it was quite typical of her days working on behalf of her school, staff, and students:

> I arrive about 7:00 in the morning. The first thing I always do is come down and talk to Gary [her principal] for a few minutes [*she laughs*] because he's an early

person, too. Yesterday I did an item review with the Department of Learning for the English 30-1 exam, so I talked to him a little about the changes in the exam and what I thought about them and so on. I also had budget issues, because he had written me a note, so I had to tell him what this particular category in my budget was because they were wondering why I had so much money in that little spot. I had to deal with that, and then I spoke to the secretary and ensured that she was going to call the UPS for my World Lit papers, because they were ready to go.

I emptied my mailbox, and I went upstairs and finished typing up seven, eight, or nine letters for scholarships I had started in the last two weeks for kids. I finished them last night, but then I was typing them and formatting them, putting them on letterhead, school letterhead, this morning, so I got those done, and then a teacher came in. No, and then another teacher came in, and she wanted to know how we were adjusting marks and how we were going to weight our assignments and so on for 10I, because we teach 10I collaboratively (the IB program at the 10 level). So I talked to her a bit about that, and she hadn't been well yesterday, so I talked to her a little bit about her health and how things were going and that kind of thing, and then a third teacher arrived and so we chatted about . . . she is my unpaid assistant [*she laughs*]. She said she would help out with the English 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 program; she's the lead teacher for that area, and so she was wondering about students' samples; teachers were asking for students' samples for English 30-2, and so I dug those out of the binder for her and gave them to her so she could photocopy them for the teachers. And then what else happened? [*she laughs*] Yeah, various teachers arrive, and I finished my letters for the kids. I had them paged but . . . it was too early—they weren't here yet.

I have a Period 2 prep on Tuesday morning, and I'm starting *The Great Gatsby,* which is one of the in-depth novels for the Part III works for my 30Is, so I had to read. They're doing chapter presentations, but I had arranged with them that I would present Chapter I and model what I wanted to have happen with their chapter. So, I had some notes to photocopy for them and an overhead to make and a few things like that. So, I went and did that, and then I came back. I had an article to read on *Gatsby,* just to refresh my mind about what I was saying about time, because I wanted to be sure I had that right for them and just quickly review my *Man of LaMancha,* which I was doing with my 30-1s this morning as well, and that was all in place because I had gone over it last night, and then after that, I went through my *Man of LaMancha* because I had to organize some deadlines for kids and let them know from now to the end of the month what they're doing, and then I did a little bit of marking, and then the bell went! So, off I went to teach *Man of LaMancha* for the block and then immediately after that *The Great Gatsby.*

At lunchtime, I arrived at the workroom to eat, and as usual there were lots of kids there. My kids were trying to find me to pick up essays, and I had a number of my theatre appreciation students who were there. We had to change our theatre appreciation date because it was Wednesday of the spring break, so they moved us to Thursday, and I was confused whether it was Tuesday or Thursday, so they were wondering if I had found out for sure what day it was, so I was telling them.

And George, a male department member, came in, and he was upset because he had a student be disrespectful to him. She was chatting when he was talking, and he asked her to move, and she said that, no, she wasn't going to move. . . . One of the vice-principals had called him in and asked him if he could stay for a few minutes tonight to meet with this girl. And so he was upset because you know . . . . Exactly. It wasn't his fault; he didn't feel it was his issue. Why does he have to meet with a child to negotiate over something that should be clearly stated, as it was insubordination. And, so, we had that whole discussion then and made some recommendations . . . .

I met with him, and then another English 30-2 teacher came in. She does this huge project with English 30-2. . . . It's called a photo essay, and the kids create an essay, a photo essay, and they invite dignitaries in. . . . There's a public display of their work, and it's really quite effective with the 30-2s, and she's working with another two ladies in the department, and they weren't . . . they didn't seem to understand what was happening, and they were demanding that she write things out more clearly for them, and so she was saying, "I have to do this." You know, she's just a volunteer for that position; she's not paid for it; she's not given time for it. She simply told me at the end of the year, "I'll do this for you because I know you've got the IB and you're so involved in IB and regular. I'll take on this responsibility."

So, we had a chat about what we were going to do at the 10I meeting in Period 8 to go over that, and then I had a few minutes to talk with this other teacher, and we chatted about . . . what was happening and interpretive changes in the exam and concerns and issues and the good things and, you know, that kind of thing, and the bell rang and, fortunately . . . I have two blocks off on Tuesday afternoon. I have all afternoon off, so my intentions were
. . . to meet with you. [*she laughs*] Although I forgot I was going to do some marking, because I'm behind with my marking because of the IB stuff. Oh, there's been so . . . I've never realized how preoccupied I would be with it; I never realized. So, everything has been sitting over here because I haven't even been thinking about it. So, now, I just . . . today I feel like, "Holy mackerel, like the whole . . . ."

So, I met with you, or I'm meeting with you. I'm going to observe a department member because I, like I was saying, I need to write letters of . . . effective letters on four of my department members this year, so I'm trying to get into their classrooms. So, he has invited me today, and I'm also meeting with another department member because we have to go over that photo essay and see what she has in the package and see if the demands of the other two teachers are reasonable or if they need to do just a little bit of work on their own! [*she laughs*] Instead of having her do it all. So I'm meeting with her, and that will be it, and then after school I have rowing teams, so at 4:00 I probably have three kids that I'm going to drive down to the rowing club and meet with 20 others who are in our rowing team this year and be there with them for an hour.

I will do a huge amount of work at home tonight because I have got to get the organization for the marking that I was going to do for my 30s. I mean, I have two oral projects that I haven't written up the marks for. I have a reading course

> that I haven't marked . . . finished marking. It's halfway done, and they just did a written assignment for me the other day, on Friday, in fact, and I've got to get started on that. My days are very long. Yesterday I started at . . . I was downtown at 8:30 and I didn't go home until 7:30 last night, and I did two letters when I got home last night. So, at 10:00, I turned on the news for five minutes, and then I went to sleep. I'm here on the weekends. I was here all day Sunday. Most weekends I'm here at least one day . . . and sometimes two, from 9:00 till 3:00 or from 10:00 till 3:00.

Sharon's description of a typical day provides a snapshot of how she served as a curriculum-change agent. She also provided a clear picture of the roles and responsibilities she had undertaken in her role as English department head at Holden High School. She had never been told that she should serve as a curriculum-change agent, but she did see herself as a department head who served as a curriculum-change agent:

> I'm not even sure I see myself as a curriculum leader. I see myself as someone—I don't know what the fancy words are—but someone who has lots of good ideas and can give you lots of good ideas and is really excited about ideas, and so that's what I give to my people, I think. I do not know if that is a curriculum leader or not. I can see myself as a curriculum servant—you know, sort of a servant leader.

She noted that she had never been told how to do her job, nor had she been given a written roles and responsibilities statement. Job training and job definition had occurred through learning as she went or through trial and error. Throughout the process, support, advice, and assistance had been provided to her by the principal, her supervisor, the former English department head, the social studies department head and the International Baccalaureate coordinator. When asked if she had had difficulty in defining her boundaries without a formal roles and responsibilities statement, Sharon replied,

> Yes, I found that very difficult because, when I define my boundary, I commit myself to that boundary and I commit myself wholeheartedly. So, when people say, "Why are you doing that?" I get really defensive—like immediately. That's something I need to deal with. I need to be able to say to people, "Well, you know, this is the way I see my job, and so I need to do this and I need people to support me."

She believed that she had done a great deal for her department. Purchasing books, finding resources—all the headaches were taken care of by her. As well, she did the paperwork that needs to be done in any department. Bringing people together, in a belief that collaboration is important, was also done by her. A teacher with six or seven classes to prepare and mark for is not concerned about the retreat on Friday; therefore, it was Sharon's concern as the department head to create opportunities to, as she put it, "take teachers out of their tiny, little busy, busy, busy world and make something larger for them." Sharon said that she could not imagine being a teacher without a department head, and she shared the hope that her teachers felt the same way.

When I asked Sharon whether there was a roles and responsibilities statement for the English department head at Holden High School, she replied,

> I would have liked to have a job description because I do not know where to say, "That's not my job." I don't know how many times in the last four years I've run to my principal and asked, "Is this my job? Can I say this? Can I do this? Can I demand this? Can I ask this of my teachers? Will the Alberta Teachers' Association be on me for, you know, professional ethics for breaking code or whatever because I do not know?" My principal has been wonderful. He's always ready to talk or ready to give advice. He is just super but, you know, if I had had some guidelines, it would have helped me to understand what my job was.

Other Participants' Views of Sharon's Work

This picture was further focused during my conversations with a teacher who had recently transferred to Sharon's department from another district high school. The teacher shared with me that Sharon had done a great deal for their department. She organized department expectations, helped form teams, selected resource books, and served as a lead teacher and mentor. In particular, the teacher credited Sharon with participating in unit planning, team teaching and coordinating the International Baccalaureate English classes. She was always having conversations about teaching with the department's

teachers, and she taught by example. Sharon really did "walk the talk." This was her leadership style. She set high standards, encouraged individual teachers' strengths, and was not too hard on teachers for their weaknesses.

When asked for an analogy that might describe Sharon's work as a curricular leader, the teacher provided a polished analogy:

> If I were to run an analogy, I think a department head (like Sharon) in the academic field would be someone very much like a director. The cast is the team; the director is part of that team. You don't achieve the play—in this case, the delivery of the newest curriculum—if the actors, the staff members, the department members are being told what to do. It has to be collegial; you have to work together as a team. You *all* have to have the same vision, or a very similar vision, of the play or the newest curriculum for the play to go on stage and be a success and for everyone to feel what they had done is being successful. It is important that everyone believes they have reached their audience, their students. The director or the department head's role is not one of bullying, although some directors do bully. However, they don't necessarily get the best product, and the play, or student achievement through curriculum implementation, is not the best that it can be, because the individual actors are working under a constant strain and tension. The best directors or department heads are those that see the strengths of their actors or teachers and work with these strengths, cultivate these strengths, and minimize the weaknesses. It is important, because there is a greater image that you're all working towards, and that's the bringing the play or the students. Bringing it to them so they can be the very best they can achieve.

The teachers identified the roles and responsibilities they believed to be essential to the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent or curriculum leader. Their conversations were situated within the context of their working relationship with Sharon—a relationship built to support curriculum implementation in Holden High School's English department.

The department head, according to one teacher I interviewed, must be clear about what the curriculum is, must have some idea about how it can be implemented, and must be able to communicate this effectively with staff. It is important for the department head

to monitor the staff to see that their teaching is meeting the requirements of the curriculum:

> If things are a little off track, she helps you get back on track in a positive and supportive way. . . . I think it's absolutely imperative that they be open to their staff and approachable, always. To be able to offer another way, another perspective on seeing situations, to be able to be creative in their own thinking, both in their own classroom and with staff members that might come to them and say, "How would you?" or "How could I?" She needs to be a good listener. I think a lot of leadership comes down to interpersonal skills—being able to listen to other people, offer suggestions, and not being heavy-handed.

Another teacher new to Holden High School's English department supported these comments and added that the department head must maintain the resources needed to teach the curriculum and monitor department success in implementing the curriculum by reviewing the department's results on the provincial diploma examination. This information can be used to determine where changes or adjustments are required of the department's teachers to further improve how the curriculum is delivered in each classroom.

A senior teacher in Sharon's department echoed what his colleagues told me. He added that department heads should be people of vision. They should see possibilities and look to improve all aspects of the department—not just results. For example, the climate of the school, the way students feel about being in school, can be improved by someone who sees the possibility, someone who makes a home of the school. The department head should be responsible for making the home environment of the department something special, something focused on students.

He also felt that leadership from the heart is an essential role for department heads working as curricular leaders in their English departments. "Heart, I think, is the quality that's often left out of studies. It is an intangible quality. The heart, the spirit, the soul of

an individual—that which makes you wish to follow someone, that which makes you happy to go into work, that which keeps you going in times like these, which are very trying. I think this is why I am here."

Sharon's immediate supervisor, an assistant principal, shared with me his perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of a subject department head, from his perspective as part of the school's leadership team. When asked, "What is the role of the department heads in your school in regard to curriculum implementation?" he replied, "Their role would be to make sure that the teachers in their department are following the new curriculum, making sure the resources are available, determining the budget needs, and working with us as we go through the budget process to make sure monies are available to purchase materials."

He then went on to explain the strengths, knowledge, attitude, and skills he had seen in Sharon that made him believe that she was the best candidate for Holden High School's English department head:

> Well, her curriculum background was really strong. She has studied extensively . . . her love of language was clear. She had taken a study leave to study interesting aspects of English. So, her knowledge, her background knowledge, and her very strong reputation in the school helped with our decision. The principal had worked with her. So, I had also heard wonderful things about her when she was on leave. I had an opportunity to observe her teaching for a period of time before she became department head. Her interpersonal skills are superb. She's very positive. Her kids, her students in the classroom, love working with her. She deals with issues when they come up. She deals very independently with things, and so I had seen a lot of Sharon's strengths here at the school before she became our English department head.

The assistant principal expanded his description with the statement that, although there is always a certain risk that a person may not be suited to the role of department head or any other leadership position, the strengths Sharon exhibited as a colleague, in

her classroom and in the school, were indicators that she was suitable for the position. In concluding our discussion of Sharon as English department head, he shared with me his view of the kind of leaders that made up the school's leadership team. He explained that their faculty council was quite close and that they had a good time together. They believed in what was best for kids and in depth of leadership. "It's not just the people of leadership, names in the school, their leadership descriptions—it's teachers and it's students." Sharon, in his opinion, led in this way. She really believed in the philosophy of the school, promoted it, and encouraged her kids to be leaders and risk takers.

Researcher's Views

Irma High School

When I asked Melody what she believed the role of the English department head as a curriculum-change agent to be, she replied, "To manage . . . to mandate . . . to motivate. But the very bottom line is to make sure the curriculum is delivered to each student who comes into our department at the appropriate level and in an appropriate manner and to make sure that all the people within the English department are fulfilling their professional obligations."

Melody serves as an excellent role model for a department head working as a curricular-change agent in a middle-management position in a large, urban, decentralized high school. Melody's story informs this study because it provides a description of the role of a curriculum-change agent in the pre-implementation phase of the newest English language arts program of studies. It describes Melody's work as a curriculum-change agent within her department, with other department heads, with district consultants, and with external organizations, such as Alberta Learning. It serves as a snapshot of the scope

required of the department head in her role as a curriculum-change agent. It also provides a picture of the different strategies used at different times in the implementation process and of the importance of school and district support and initiatives in the work of the English department head as a change agent.

Holden High School

Sharon's perception of herself as a curriculum-change agent was supported by what her department members and her supervisor told me about her work. They identified the same main priorities of the curriculum-change agent that Sharon had identified, but they put those priorities in a different order: first, to aid in the improvement process at Holden High (achievement and retention); second, to expand the knowledge of teachers and students; and, third, to ensure that the department had the resources necessary to implement the newest program of studies.

Sharon's colleagues tended to view her style as a curriculum-change agent in the same way Sharon did, but, again, they prioritized these qualities differently. They considered her style to be "collaborative, collegial, and facilitative." Her supervisor also felt that she was "reflective" in her work style. They listed her general change-agent skills as having the capacity to listen and possessing interpersonal ease. Sharon, on the other hand, felt that her best general skills were listening, reading, and facilitating group functioning.

The strategies Sharon used most often as a curriculum-change agent were developing a support structure, providing staff and students with emotional support, and providing support for the planning process. She believed that the outcomes of her work

were the use of new products in classrooms, improved student achievement and retention, and an improved department and school climate.

Sharon's staff felt that the strategies she most often used were collaboration and support for planning, resource linking, and emotional support. Her staff believed that the outcomes of her work included greater student achievement and retention, effective program implementation, and improved professional capacity of staff members. Sharon and her staff members believed that she worked as a curricular leader with her department members. Sharon saw herself as an example of a servant leader who facilitates or directs the work done in the department to implement the newest program of studies in ways that support the improvement of student achievement and retention.

Roles and Responsibilities of the English Department Head

The roles and responsibilities of the English department head at Holden High School as perceived by the study participants are, in content and in form, not unlike those cited in the literature-review section. These roles and responsibilities are part of the oral tradition of many secondary schools, including Holden High School. Neither Sharon nor her supervisor possessed a written roles and responsibilities statement to frame the boundaries that Sharon worked within or for use as the framework for evaluating Sharon's work as English department head. The literature review made it clear that this ambiguity about what the work entails is not uncommon. The roles and responsibilities of department heads are often forged through a combination of the personality and talents of the department head and the principal's belief and expectations about the work of subject department heads in the school.

The participants from Holden High School contributed to the development of a clear picture of Sharon's roles and responsibilities as English department head. These roles and responsibilities are categorized below according to the managerial and the leadership components of the position.

Sharon was perceived to be responsible for possessing the following attributes in fulfilling her managerial roles and responsibilities:

- Clear idea of how to implement curriculum
- Capacity to communicate how to implement curriculum with department members
- Ability to monitor department members to ensure that the curriculum is being taught effectively
- Desire to help teachers in need of assistance with curriculum implementation, in creative, positive, and supportive ways
- Ability to use provincial diploma examination results data for monitoring student achievement and for information about what areas of the curriculum delivery require adjustment for improving student achievement on diploma examinations
- Skills to acquire and maintain resources required to implement the curriculum
- Skills to develop and maintain the department budget

Sharon was perceived to be responsible for possessing the following attributes in fulfilling her leadership roles and responsibilities:

- A vision of where the department is going and how to make it improve over time
- Ability to serve as a servant leader
- Ability to lead with heart
- Desire to improve the climate of the department by making it a home for students and staff
- Ability to serve as a role model for teachers in the department
- Ability to serve as a curriculum leader whose reputation is based on having a strong curriculum background
- Capacity to work independently
- Confidence to serve as a member of the school's leadership team as a member of the school's faculty council
- Capacity to assume leadership roles at the school level or with other educational organizations, such as Alberta Learning
- Belief in Holden High School's philosophy: Believing in what is right for kids

Qualities that do not fit in the categories of managerial and leadership roles and responsibilities but that affect how the department head works with colleagues also emerged. These qualities include a positive reputation with colleagues, excellent interpersonal skills, a positive attitude, a capacity to work hard, a sense of humour, and the ability to have fun.

The fact that the roles and responsibilities that constituted the work of the English department head at Holden High School existed as part of the school's oral tradition

rather than being written down was problematic. This issue was also cited in the literature review (Brown, 1993; Hart, 1995; Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Macpherson & Brooker, 2000). Providing department heads with an understanding of their work boundaries allows them to work without worrying about whether they are undertaking too much or too little. As well, if department heads know what is expected, they will have a clearer picture of what will be used as the basis for their performance assessments. For those outside of the department, a roles and responsibilities statement provides a better understanding of the work of department heads or curriculum leaders who manage in the middle.

Qualifications of the English Department Head

When interviewing the participants about their perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the English department head, I asked them what qualifications an applicant for the position of secondary subject department head should have. Like the roles and responsibilities, the qualifications for the position were not written down but, rather, were part of the oral tradition of the school's leadership team.

Holden High School was typical in not having the qualifications written down and included in a document such as the school's policy and operations manual. The literature on the secondary department head does not address this topic. However, the participants from Holden shared their beliefs about the qualifications needed for being their school's English department head.

The teacher participants did not believe that a department head should be required to have formal training beyond a bachelor's degree. They believed that strong interpersonal skills and excellent communication skills, not only with students but also

with colleagues, are essential. A person who is responsive to his or her job, they believed, is responsive whether he or she has a master's degree, a doctoral degree, or neither. A capacity to lead was considered to be part of who the department head is as a person. Knowledge of the subject area, how to implement the curriculum, and how to monitor its implementation was considered essential. They felt that training for the position can be gained through a combination of formal and informal experiences; applicants should be continuous learners. As well, who is qualified depends on the characteristics of the school requiring a new department head. More-academic schools may require a department head with more-formal academic training. However, experience was considered a more important qualification than formal education. One teacher pointed out that many 25- and 26-year-old teachers are doing master's degrees, but unless they have amazing interpersonal skills, they will not be suitable so early in their careers for the position of department head.

The senior teacher's comments were very informative in regard to the kind of person and leader who would be most qualified for the department head position at Holden High School. He believed that great teachers go back to school after they have gained a sense of what they are lacking or if they want some rejuvenation or a spark in their lives. This was what Sharon did; she did a master's degree, and she had a sense of where she wanted to go with a graduate degree. Heart, this senior teacher emphasized, is an intangible quality that is often left out of studies. He believed that it is easy to give up or to do a second-rate job in today's educational climate, but leaders help teachers become committed to something through their vitality and vision. To be a department head requires an ability to influence others in the classroom and in the department.

Sharon's leadership—leadership with heart—was why he was part of Holden's English department.

When I interviewed Sharon's supervisor about the qualifications he believed necessary for an educator applying for the position of English department head at Holden High School, he provided many of the same criteria suggested by the teacher participants. He identified necessary qualifications: a strong curriculum background; strong interpersonal skills; a strong reputation with staff, students, and the principal; a collegial approach to leadership; compatibility with the school's philosophy and leadership staff; and a capacity to lead at the school level. As well, he felt that the department head should act with integrity, be organized, be prepared and on time, have the ability to deal in a timely manner with a variety of concerns as they arise, be able to conduct classroom observations, provide feedback in a positive and supportive manner, and encourage leadership in staff and students.

When asked how important it is for the English department head to have training beyond a bachelor's degree in secondary English curriculum, he replied,

> I think the fact that Sharon has a master's degree in curriculum helps her in her leadership because of her love of English. It gives her the ability to suggest things to her colleagues that might be interesting to study, or I think it adds to the whole idea of "Let's take a chance and try some new things." She is confident because she has such a strong background. However, she took those courses only because she loved the study of English. I don't think she took the courses in order to be a leader, because she didn't take leadership-type courses. It makes her a wonderful role model.

When I asked him if he believed there would be an advantage to including educational requirements beyond a bachelor's degree in postings for department head positions, he said that he believed the reverse to be advantageous. He was afraid that really skilled people who could be an asset to his staff but who may not have master's degrees would

not feel comfortable applying. There were department heads at Holden High that he had much respect for who did not have master's degrees. He went on to say that certain people bring certain skills, and a lot of those skills are not teachable. Good people skills were number one for him.

Sharon's description of how she defined her role as an English department head provided an image of the qualifications she viewed as important. These qualifications included having the skills necessary to manage the department, such as paper processing, resource acquisitions, and budgeting; having the capacity to define the job in the absence of a roles and responsibilities statement; and being able to commit wholeheartedly to working within those boundaries. As well, Sharon felt it important for the department head to be able to develop supportive relationships with the school's leadership staff, in particular the immediate supervisor and the principal, and to be adept at finding a balance between supporting department staff and having them support the department head's work. She also felt it important to believe that excellent teaching is fostered in every classroom in the English department and that department heads have the capacity to serve as curriculum leaders, the expertise to organize professional development activities for the department, and the ability to stay current in their knowledge of research related to the teaching of secondary English curriculum.

When asked whether she believed that a master's degree should be listed as a qualification when a department head position is posted, Sharon replied, "Well, I am not sure, because I think everybody brings a certain quality to their leadership, but I would hate to think that we were limiting people from applying, because I think that variety is really nice. However, I would really have liked a job description."

The following qualifications for the position of English department head were put forward by the study participants from Holden High School, not the school's principal or the school district's human resources department. These qualifications were part of the oral body of knowledge of the study participants that described the kind of educator they perceived as suited to the role of the English department head at their school. The qualifications and attributes put forward included the following:

- Either formal or informal training, and not necessarily training beyond a bachelor's degree in education (for example, many years of teaching experience, participation in professional development in-services, current knowledge of education research about secondary English teaching, and leadership skill development acquired from other leadership roles)
- Expert knowledge of subject curriculum and how to implement curriculum and monitor its implementation
- Compatibility with the school environment where the position is available (for example, an academic school might require a more academic-oriented department head than would a performing arts high school)
- Creative
- Excellent classroom teacher
- Management skills to do department paperwork, resource acquisition, timetabling, and budgeting
- Organized and able to meet deadlines
- Flexible and able to deal with a variety of issues as they arise
- Ability to conduct in-classroom teacher observations

- Ability to provide performance feedback in a positive and supportive way
- Skills to create, organize, and provide professional development activities for department staff
- Capacity to foster excellent teaching in every English classroom in the school
- Capacity to encourage leadership abilities in students and department staff
- Integrity
- Capacity to develop a leadership role in the absence of a roles and responsibilities statement
- Ability to develop supportive relationships with the immediate supervisor and the principal
- Belief that the role of the department head is to serve as a curriculum leader
- Belief that it is important to lead with heart
- Most important, strong interpersonal skills and strong communication skills with students and colleagues

Many of the characteristics and qualifications for the position of subject department head listed by the study participants at Holden High School were also cited in the curriculum-leadership section of the literature review. Compatibility with the school population and environment is discussed in the literature on situational leadership (Turner, 1983). The awareness that a department head should be more than a department manager and should serve as a curriculum leader is also present in the literature (Brown, 1993). The belief that the brightest and the most educated are unlikely to become leaders

if they lack excellent communication and interpersonal skills is also supported in the review (West-Burnham, 1997). The need for integrity on the part of educational leaders in all aspects of their practice is voiced in the writings on moral leadership in education (Fullan, 2001). The perceptions of the participants at Holden High School about the necessary qualifications for the English department head at their school are consistent with the research literature on curriculum leadership.

Perceptions of the participants that merit further research and debate are those related to the educational qualifications suitable for the role of the department head. A question that emerged was whether relying on an oral tradition for job qualifications is an advisable and adequate practice in a postmodern, complex, sophisticated school environment. Are strong communication and interpersonal skills adequate qualifications for leading without the support of appropriate leadership training and development? Of the participants I interviewed at Holden High School, the only ones with training at the master's level were Sharon and one teacher participant. Even Sharon's supervisor, the assistant principal, had no training beyond the bachelor's degree. This raises the question of whether the participants' opinion about the need for department heads to have more than an undergraduate degree was influenced by their own lack of education beyond a bachelor's degree. Their opinion about educational qualifications is the opposite of the opinions of the two senior leadership staff interviewed in the site-based management section of this dissertation.

Two of the three senior leadership participants were of the opinion that if department heads in a decentralized school district are responsible for curriculum leadership, they must be curriculum experts. Principals in large decentralized high

schools are, because of their management responsibilities and the complexities and breadth of subjects provided in high schools, unable to serve as the only curriculum leaders in their schools. They are forced to rely on the curriculum expertise present at the department level. This explains the support of the senior leadership participants for department heads to have education beyond the bachelor's level. As well, according to the two senior leaders, a master's degree in curriculum or leadership provides the department head with research knowledge and skills. The work of Stevenson (1995) clearly supports the need for consultants to have this background. This same background would assist department heads in their work as in-house consultants with their teaching staff—a role that became evident in my conversations with teachers in Holden's English department. The difference in opinion between school staff and senior leadership staff about levels of education required by subject department heads merits further research.

Implementation Strategies

When I undertook the study interviews at Holden, the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies was in its third year, or the Grade 12 year. Prior to establishing what had been done to implement the newest program, I needed to develop a picture of the participants' attitudes about the program.

The attitudes of the teachers I interviewed had been shaped by the number of years they had been teaching high school English. Teachers who had been teaching high school English for three years or less had just finished implementing the newest junior high school English language arts program of studies, and in the words of a new high school teacher, "I just go along with the flow. What I was doing at the junior high school level are the sorts of things that are a part of the newest high school English program of

studies. So, for me, it's not new. I'm just doing it at different levels." When asked about the response of most teachers to the newest program of studies, the same teacher replied, "The newest program of studies just put down on paper what people were already doing. And a lot of teachers that I talked to felt the same way. I mean, 'What's new about this? Not a whole heck of a lot. Because we do it already.' And I know that was our department head's own view, as well. And that's the way she's addressed it with the English department."

Another participant, who had been teaching high school English for about 10 years, agreed that most teachers had been actively engaged in the implementation process: "Yes, I think they are. Some to more of an extent and perhaps some lesser. And I think their willingness to implement is partly due to . . . where they are in their career, and yet I think everybody's adjusting. It's verification or an alignment with what's already been going on in the classroom."

The teacher provided an example: "Now I am using a vocabulary that's specific to viewing. You start to include a lot more things that way. . . . Of course, you go through the curriculum for example, this is true. You want them to be aware of, be exposed to them, have the experience of working with those visual things so that later when their vocabulary comes up, and is asked of them, it's already been practised and taught, . . . it's on our exams and it's something we work with."

Holden's English department head provided a clear picture of her attitudes about the newest program of studies. Sharon said,

> I have embraced it. I don't see it as a new curriculum. I always did representation. I did representation 10 years ago at this school, and I was told I was giving Mickey Mouse assignments, and I said I didn't care. Like, "This is the way I teach English, and so get out of my classroom." So, for me, there is no new curriculum.

> I've always done metacognition. I've always drawn attention to the ways kids think: "How did you get that idea? Can you show somebody else how you do it so they can learn from your way of thinking?"

She also expressed her belief that, rather than implementing from ground zero, her department had been involved in a process of fine tuning:

> We've had two retreats a year—one for 10-1, 20-1, 30-1 teachers and another for 10-2, 20-2, 30-2 teachers. So, four retreats in our department, and the teachers teaching in those areas got together, talked about what they wanted to change, what needed to be implemented, and the areas to be worked on in a given school year. This is the way I began to make the changes required in order to implement the newest program of studies with the cooperation of my department. So, when the curriculum came on, and we said, "Okay, what do we need to be doing here?" people kept saying, "Well, so I am doing that with this unit, aren't I, Sharon? Okay, we're covered; we are actually implementing that new curriculum."

Therefore, implementation of Alberta's newest English language arts program of studies was not an onerous, resisted task at Holden High School. Rather, it was embraced as a verification of what had already been occurring in many English classrooms at the school. The teachers worked collaboratively with Sharon to understand the requirements of the newest program of studies, add units as required, and modify existing units to better reflect the requirements at each grade level. If any hesitation to implement existed in the department, it came from senior department members who were reluctant to master the resources and harness the energy required to change what they were comfortable teaching in their classrooms. Nevertheless, the changes were made.

The teachers at Holden High School believed that, during that phase, Sharon provided them with a high level of organizational and administrative support. In the department office, the repository of the department files, Sharon organized and stored copies of lesson plans, units, curriculum documents, and exams. These files were updated on an ongoing basis and open to use by all department members. Copies of materials and

pertinent information, as well as being stored in the department files, were given to teachers when requested, distributed at meetings, put in mailboxes, or sent out by e-mail. Information from other parts of the educational community that was distributed included rubrics developed by the district's assessment department, articles from leadership services related to research on secondary English, curriculum updates from Alberta Learning, and information and updates from the Assessment Branch of Alberta Learning. This served as an excellent support structure for department members.

Sharon also functioned as a network builder in her department. With new teachers, she shared her program knowledge and technical expertise in a variety of ways. In doing so, she often served as a master teacher. For example, she worked one-on-one with teachers new to her English department and new to secondary English teaching. When the newest member of Sharon's department met with her one-on-one, Sharon shared ideas, showed the teacher where things were located in the department, and provided the teacher with tips for doing certain things. This included sharing lesson plans (depending on the assignment) and required using social skills to interact with other department members.

As well as sharing her own materials, Sharon fostered networks among department members. This, too, was a great help to a first-year department member. In Holden's English department, ideas were shared and welcomed. Department members shared ideas, verbal anecdotes, binders, units, outlines, plans, curriculum materials, and suggestions—invaluable support for a new high school English teacher.

The study participants provided many examples of Sharon's functioning as a master teacher and sharing her technical expertise with all staff members to assist them

with curriculum implementation in their classrooms. The teacher of English Language Arts 20-1 (the academic Grade 11 course) provided an excellent example of how she worked with Sharon to implement literature circles, using the novel *Lord of the Flies,* in her classroom:

> Sharon did a presentation on lit circles for a group of teachers, and when I shared with her that I was going to do lit circles in my classroom, she went over her entire presentation with me one-on-one. She spent time with me after school, and she talked through the literature circle idea with me. Then, I went away over the Christmas holiday and created this lit circle for *Lord of the Flies* where the students became cultural anthropologists studying the culture of these boys on the island, and they and I created these files, with these activities that they had to do in each file. I got it all set up and I took it back to her and I said, "What do you think?" She took off and read it over the weekend. When she brought it back, she said, "I think it's a great piece of work and it would be fun!" She helped me tweak it in a couple places, and she helped me with the organizing of the groups to run it successfully.

When working with the 20-1 teacher on the literature circle unit, Sharon was able to build bridges with department members through her program knowledge and, in doing so, she also built trust and rapport. Sharon was also building the teacher's confidence in what she was doing in her classroom.

Another teacher shared how Sharon had helped to build her confidence. Before the school year started, she had gone to Sharon's house and worked on the year's unit plans for their 20I, 30-2, and diploma English classes. This helped the teacher to know which texts she would have to read over the summer and which areas of the International Baccalaureate program she would have to refamiliarize herself with, because she had not taught the program for a few years.

As well as supporting her teachers individually, Sharon worked toward improving collaboration and helping department members function in groups or work as a team. This was evident in the planning and common assignments and assessments implemented

by the 10-1 academic English teachers, aligning these courses with the newest English language arts program of studies.

The department teachers worked on the alignment of writing done by all Grade 10 students. For instance, they implemented four common assignments, including the mid-term and final exams. They marked each other's papers and set standards. Teachers became heavily involved in the standard setting based on their experience with marking diploma exams. They assisted in finding samples that represented the standards in the new program. The collaboration and sharing were spearheaded and supported by Sharon and the senior teachers in her department. As well as supporting collaboration for problem solving among department members, working together on aligning the Grade 10-1 academic English course assessment strategies with the newest program of studies allowed the senior teachers to take initiative and become teacher leaders in the department.

Another example of building independence, initiative, and program knowledge was Sharon's support of the essay-writing contest organized and carried out by a 30-2 teacher. This teacher coordinated the essay unit. A day was planned when he brought in judges from the community and other teachers and staff and had a celebration.

This teacher also served as a teacher leader for the 10-2, 20-2, and 30-2 diploma English courses. The teacher leader approach was used to develop most courses in the department. For example, three teachers taught English 30-2, and one was responsible for taking ideas or concerns to Sharon. Then they would come back with any responses and, in doing so, coordinated for everyone so that only one teacher ran to Sharon with questions. Then the three teachers got together and hashed out what needed to be worked

out in parts of the course, such as the photo essay in the 30-2 course. They met as a mini-department within the department.

Sharon also worked on possible conflicts through mediation. For example, Sharon's conflict-mediation skills were used in the department's work to construct final examinations: "Putting exams together, it's a very collegial thing, but if Sharon thinks there's a problem, she brings it up, confronts us, and lays it on the table and has us debate. Then, if the department doesn't think there is a problem, there is not a problem. She's quite willing to say, 'Okay, fine, I stand corrected. This is not a problem,' so we move with it."

Sharon also assisted in curriculum implementation through providing professional development activities. She organized and presented two retreats a year—one for each new program stream. She encouraged—and, during her first year as department head, required—teachers in the department to give short presentations on ways to change teaching units or strategies to align with the newest program of studies. She and her department members presented literature-related sessions at the Alberta Teachers' Association's specialist council conference for English teachers in Alberta. The teachers shared some of the initiatives undertaken by the department. For example, while planning units together, teachers highlighted and recognized a new component of the curriculum—the visual component. So, although it was not necessarily newly taught at Holden High School, it was recognized and evaluated in keeping with the newest program of studies. They discussed together that curriculum materials had changed, titles had changed, and the way they taught those materials had changed. Everyone in the department worked to develop a common understanding of the newest program of studies.

For example, if there was a visual component to an assignment, project, or theme, instead of doing it in passing, the teachers recognized it, recorded on it, taught it differently, and used a strategy for it. They planned for it, celebrated it, and sometimes posted it on the workroom bulletin board. They created rubrics for assignments. They might then repeat or modify this, depending on the students and the class. There was a lot of cooperation in the school, but the teachers also stressed that the cooperation did not take away from the individual developments, changes, and suggestions, all of which were shared in the department. The department head shared, developed, modified, and stored the units.

Throughout the various sections of this study, interpersonal communication skills and interpersonal ease have been considered essential to the effective work of the English department head as a curriculum-change agent. Curriculum-implementation skills of the department head also include interpersonal ease, which is expressed most clearly in how Sharon provided emotional support. The 30-2 diploma English teacher believed that Sharon had allowed her to feel free to be herself in the classroom by saying, for example, that her class had always been the most chaotic but real learning was going on in there. The teacher felt that if the kids were really learning, she did not have to restrict them, even if they were noisy and interactive. Sharon allowed her to feel that she could encourage her students to play with ideas in a way productive to them. This allowed her to experience the kind of personal growth she wanted her students to experience. In passing this assurance on to the 30-2 teacher, Sharon provided a great boost of confidence to her department.

The teacher, with her focus on creativity in the classroom and the development of the representation aspect of the newest program of studies through using drama in her classroom, summed up Sharon's role as a curriculum-change agent using the analogy of a director and the director's skill set. The analogy was quoted before, but it also applies here:

> I think a department head (like Sharon) in the academic field would be someone very much like a director. The cast is the team; the director is part of that team. You don't achieve the play—in this case, the delivery of the newest curriculum—if the actors, the staff members, the department members are being told what to do. It has to be collegial; you have to work together as a team. You *all* have to have the same vision, or a very similar vision, of the play or the newest curriculum for the play to go on stage.

The interviews with Sharon and her supervisor supported the contributions of Holden's English department head's role as a curriculum-change agent in the implementation of Alberta Learning's newest English language arts program of studies. Sharon's ability to help her department function as a group was present in a variety of situations. The common exam committees, the retreats, and the monthly department meetings facilitated teamwork. Her participation in conferences held by the Alberta Teachers' Association and her organizing of and presenting at department retreats illustrated her ability to prepare and teach adults systematically. Sharon functioned as a master teacher who assisted and supported the work of her teachers, as was seen in the example of her collaboration with a department member to develop the literature circles unit, which was then demonstrated to other department members. This work also highlighted her program knowledge, technical expertise, and initiative taking. Her organizing of the department's resources and sharing of information with her staff to assist them with their teaching indicated her aptitude for the organizational and

administrative aspects of her work. Through her constant efforts to serve the teachers in her department, she developed a sense of safety and openness in her department. In doing so, she built up trust and rapport with her staff. Sharon's greatest contribution to her department came as a result of her interpersonal ease with her colleagues. Her capacity to be open, to deal with people in a kind and confident manner, and to collaborate developed the personal relationships and networks necessary for Sharon to work as a change agent in the implementation of the newest program of studies.

Sharon viewed herself as a servant leader (Russell, 2001). Her immediate supervisor and her department members viewed her as a servant leader with a heart (Ehrich & McCrea, 1999). Her unique combination of head, heart, and service allowed Sharon to serve as an exemplary curriculum leader in her work as a curricular-change agent. Sharon serves as an excellent role model for a subject department head working as a curricular-change agent in a middle-management position in a large, urban, decentralized high school in Alberta.

Both Alike in Dignity

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the case study of Melody, the English department head at Irma High School, is less voluminous than the case study of Sharon, her counterpart at Holden High School. However, when I reviewed the transcripts from my interviews at both schools, it became evident that Melody's way of working was essentially the same as Sharon's. However, a factor that made a significant difference in the information collected was that the case-study research conducted at Irma High School was conducted three years before the case-study research conducted at Holden High School.

Even though the department heads were working as curriculum-change agents at different points in the implementation process, the change-agent skills and strategies used by Melody were similar to those used by Sharon. The participants from Melody's department and the participants from Sharon's department regarded their department heads as exceptional curriculum leaders working as curriculum-change agents in their departments.

The case studies provide a picture of the role of the secondary English department head through detailed descriptions of the varied and multiple realities of department heads Melody and Sharon, their supervisors, and their staffs. The descriptions of the department heads' work as curriculum-change agents or curriculum leaders are more similar than different. The differences relate to where each department was in the implementation process at the time of the interviews. The three-year time difference between the interviews conducted at the schools provide snapshots of the role of the department head as a curricular-change agent at different times in the implementation process. Irma's department head began implementing the newest program of studies prior to the mandatory implementation dates set by Alberta Learning to provide Irma's teachers with more time to phase in the program and the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of the program of studies before it became mandatory. When I conducted the case study of Holden's English department head, mandatory implementation was already under way in secondary English departments throughout Alberta.

Both department heads were viewed as exemplary curriculum-change agents or curriculum leaders in their schools and in their English departments. Their exemplary work as curriculum-change agents was selected, shaped, focused, and supported by their

deliberate and skilful use of the external and internal opportunities available to them for implementing the newest program of studies at specific times and places along the curriculum-implementation continuum, beginning with pre-implementation work through mandatory implementation work. This work will continue with the ongoing delivery of the newest program of studies in their departments.

The intent of this study was not to attempt to apply findings from the case studies to other situations. However, it is possible that the detailed description in the case studies will provide insights into the role of secondary department heads as curriculum-change agents in the implementation of their specific programs of study. This case-to-case transfer view of external validity invites the reader to determine what in the study fits his or her situation (Firestone, 1993).

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTIONS, OBSERVATIONS, AND DISCUSSIONS

Lens[2]
by Anne Wilkinson

I

The poet's daily chore
Is my long duty;
To keep and cherish my good lens
For love and war
And wasps about the lilies
And mutiny within.

My woman's eye is weak
And veiled with milk;
My working eye is muscled
With a curious tension,
Stretched and open
As the eyes of children;
Trusting in its vision
Even should it see
The holy holy spirit gambol
Counterheadwise,
Lithe and warm as any animal.

My woman's iris circles
A blind pupil;
The poet's eye is crystal,
Polished to accept the negative,
The contradictions in a proof
And the accidental

Candour of the shadows;
The shutter, oiled and smooth
Clicks on the grace of heroes
Or on some bestial act
When lit with radiance
The afterwords the actors speak
Give depth to violence,

Or if the bull is great
And the matador
And the sword
Itself the metaphor.

II

In my dark room the years
Lie in solution,
Develop film by film.
Slow at first and dim
Their shadows bite
On the fine white pulp of paper.

An early snap of fire
Licking the arms of air
I hold against the light, compare
The details with a prehistoric view
Of land and sea
And cradles of mud that rocked
The wet and sloth of infancy.

A stripe of tiger, curled
And sleeping on the ribs of reason
Prints as Canada Post Customs Clearance
Charge As Eve and Adam, pearled
With sweat, staring at an apple core;

And death, in black and white
In politic in green and Easter film,
Lands on steely points, a dancer
Disciplined to the foolscap stage,
The property of poets
Who command his robes, expose
His moving likeness on the page.

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[2] *Note.* From *Heresies: The Complete Poems of Anne Wilkinson, 1924–1961,* edited by D. Irvine, 2003, Montreal: Véhicule Press. Copyright 2003 by Signal Editions/Véhicule Press. Reprinted with permission.

The Album: The Motifs and the Metaphor

Throughout this study, the lens and the snapshot have been the overarching motifs for the qualitative research undertaken. This chapter is the photo album in which selected snapshots have been arranged. The lens used for this final chapter focuses on bringing together the previous chapters, pictures, or snapshots for reflection, observation, and discussion of the study from beginning to middle to end. This metaphor is well represented by Anne Wilkinson's poem "Lens."

Why This Study?

Curious to know how other department heads worked with their colleagues to implement curriculum in their departments and wanting to see the connections between my work as a department head and the work of my peers (other urban secondary English department heads), I formulated the research question for this study. The question was refocused over time and became, What is the role of the English department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies? Through writing my autobiography, preparing the literature review, interviewing the participants, analyzing the information collected, and writing the case study, I came to understand the role of two secondary English department heads in urban districts in Alberta.

Within this context, I came to understand that, in my role as an English department head in a large urban decentralized school district, I had worked as an instructional leader or curriculum-change agent to continue the implementation of the then-mandated secondary Alberta English program of studies. This became evident when I was researching all aspects of the study but in particular when working with the

research of Stevenson (1995) and interviewing the two department heads, Melody and Sharon. As department heads, we had all brought a similar understanding to our work as curriculum leaders in our role as curriculum-change agents. The work we each undertook was influenced by the decade in which each served, and we all saw ourselves as servant leaders—servant leaders engaged in the implementation of the English program of studies in our school districts.

I came to understand that the role of the secondary English department head in a postmodern urban high school in Alberta is to work with teachers to ensure that they implement the program of studies to the best of their abilities, to ensure the highest level of achievement possible for every student enrolled in an English class in the school. The following quotation from a teacher participant from Holden High School was introduced in Chapter 5 but merits inclusion again, in the album, because it exemplifies how a department head can best work as a curriculum-change agent by functioning like a director of a play:

> The director or the department head's role is not one of bullying, although some directors do bully. However, they don't necessarily get the best product, and the play, or student achievement through curriculum implementation, is not the best that it can be, because the individual actors are working under a constant strain and tension. The best directors or department heads are those that see the strengths of their actors or teachers and work with these strengths, cultivate these strengths, and minimize the weaknesses. It is important, because there is a greater image that you're all working towards, and that's the bringing the play or the students. Bringing it to them so they can be the very best they can achieve.

Autobiographical Connections

After completing the autobiographical section of the study, I developed a clearer understanding of how my life experiences have shaped the lens through which I see my personal and professional worlds. Being raised to be Jewish with both Jewish and

Christian family and growing up as a minority member of my childhood community crafted the lens through which I view the world, a lens suited for the work of a qualitative researcher. Smith (1991) states that those who are safe and secure in the belief that their culture is the only "right culture" are not likely to be open to the possibilities present in other cultures. My place within and between the Judeo-Christian communities helped me to become open to the possibilities present in other cultures. My hermeneutic lens was crafted in childhood, then focused through education and community service. My work as a teacher and department head developed my openness, desire, and capacity to become a qualitative researcher capable of conducting this study.

The dynamic relationship between myself as the interviewer and those interviewed made it possible for me to be the data collector and processing transducer (Owens, 1982). My experience as an English department head gave me the opportunity to become intimately familiar with the role of the department head as a curriculum leader capable of serving as a curriculum-change agent. The case-study participants were knowledgeable about the work of their department heads and articulate in their responses to the interview questions. My highly refined and crafted lens ground with my life experiences has helped me to emphasize, describe, judge, compare, portray, evoke, and create for the case study reader the sense of having been there (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Department Head as Curriculum Leader

The literature review revealed that the role and the work of the secondary subject department head has begun, out of necessity, to shift from an industrial age, line authority, management position focused on timetabling teachers, ordering textbooks, and preparing the department budget to that of a manager and a curriculum leader in a

postmodern secondary school environment. This change in attitude and definition of the role and work of the secondary department head is illustrated in Sergiovanni (1984) and Fullan (2002). These writers view secondary subject department heads as curriculum leaders. Sergiovanni (1984) notes that the typical job description for a department head normally includes duties that are widely varied in complexity and level of responsibility:

> Conducts department meetings, visits classrooms, recommends materials for acquisitions, attends formal meetings, implements administrative directives, orients teachers to policy, encourages enrollment in professional groups, develops plans, establishes standards, answers inquiries regarding courses and prepares evaluations. (p. 31)

The department head does the management tasks but is first and foremost a curriculum leader. Fullan (2002) examines leadership for school improvement, or the work of the secondary subject department head as a curriculum-change agent for the purpose of school improvement through increased student achievement. He emphasizes the necessity of cultivating leaders at many levels in schools. Focusing solely on the work of the principal as the curriculum leader in a school has taken us to a certain point on the continuum of continued school improvement, but further improvement will depend on principals who can foster the conditions necessary for sustained educational reform in a complex and ever-changing society. This must include cultivating other curriculum leaders in schools, such as secondary subject department heads who can serve as curriculum leaders in a variety of roles. These roles should include serving as curriculum-change agents within their departments, their schools, and the larger school community. If further school reforms related to curriculum implementation are to occur, principals should no longer work alone. Other curriculum leaders, such as subject department heads, must be prepared and directed to assist their principals with this work.

Although the literature on secondary department heads has shifted its focus over time, what has remained constant is the barriers present in schools that hamper the department head's ability to function as a curriculum leader. The first barrier is the lack of training provided for the position. Turner (1983) argues for training for the position of department head. Too few department heads are skilled in executing leadership functions with fellow professionals. Most come directly from the classroom with much more experience working with adolescents.

Henderson (1993) also comments on the training of department heads:

> What was true in the 1960's appears to be true today: there is confusion over the role of the department head. It is manifest in the differing perceptions of the role by administrators and teachers, in the lack of selection criteria and training, and the inability of the department heads to clearly articulate their own role. (p. 25)

In regard to the duties of department heads, Callahan (1971) states,

> A logical way to begin the task of assessing a department head's achievement is by determining at the onset just what is expected of him. Unless a chairman's duties are clearly defined . . . his work may suffer as much from lack of perspective as from any lack of ability on his own part. (p.14)

If department heads are to work as curriculum leaders, they must be properly trained and given time to do this work. Department heads are normally allotted release time of one period a day in which to fulfill their department head responsibilities. Lucy (1986) found that 60% of department heads taught two or more classes and that some department heads taught as many as five. The department heads in my study taught for a minimum of 75% of the day. Lucy also found that teaching and developing curriculum are negatively correlated, meaning that the more time department heads spend on teaching, the less time they have available for curriculum leadership. Therefore,

principals who want their department heads to assist them with curriculum leadership work should reduce the department heads' teaching loads.

If members of the education community—in particular, district and secondary school leaders—believe that the work of the secondary department head includes both managerial and curriculum leadership roles and responsibilities, they must ensure that department heads receive adequate support for meeting these expectations. This support should include the provision of adequate training, a clear definition of department head duties in a written roles and responsibilities statement, and adequate time in the school day to serve as a manager and a curriculum leader in the department.

This study highlights the need for adequate training and a definition of duties in a written roles and responsibilities statement for secondary subject department heads. As well, in the research on both curriculum leaders and curriculum leadership and the need for curriculum leadership to be dispersed and shared throughout educational organizations, it became evident that a definition of who a curriculum leader could be and what the work would be was not available. Therefore, I have developed the following definitions, which have the potential to be applied in other work on curriculum leaders and curriculum leadership:

> A curriculum leader is an educational leader, such as a secondary subject department head, who works with teachers to develop, interpret, implement, assess, and revise curriculum to improve student achievement. The processes are not linear. Curriculum leaders, such as department heads, can engage in any of these processes as required to improve student achievement in their districts, schools, departments, and most importantly, classrooms.

Site-Based Management and Curriculum Leadership

Chapter 4 dealt with the impact of site-based management on curriculum leadership. It provided insights into how the role of the secondary subject department

head has been affected by the implementation of site-based management in Alberta school districts.

Gronn (2000) helps to clarify the theoretical underpinnings or the rationale for site-based management as a way of managing most suited to postmodern educational organizations. To do this, Gronn recapitulates the shortcomings of prevailing views of leadership, considers two notions about the necessity of leadership as we know it, and develops the notion of distributed properties. This provided me with an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of site- or school-based management.

The associate superintendent interviewed in Chapter 4 indicated that site-based management was not meant to be implemented in a way that minimized the importance of curriculum leadership. The superintendent of the day, working with his senior leadership staff, set out to separate the *what* from the *how*. The curriculum was called the *what* and the programs of instruction the *how*. Expert teachers were required who understood the needs of their students and defined effective programs to meet those needs. The mission of the organization became the *what,* or the delivery of the curricula. The senior leadership group determined that the more refined the mission statement, the looser the needs or the *how* could be distributed to the schools. In other words, as long as the schools were working within the business of the organization or the organization's mission, almost any decision made in the schools would be appropriate. This form of distributed leadership (Gronn, 2000) provided principals with the managerial discretion to utilize resources allocated to their schools to best meet the needs of their students. Site-based management was not to become the *what* but, rather, the *how* and was considered to be a more effective way of managing the resources given to school districts to achieve

their mission: to ensure the highest level of achievement possible from every student in the district.

When the former associate superintendent was asked if school leaders must work as curriculum leaders to ensure that the business of the organization is accomplished, he replied,

> Yes. In schools there needs to be line authority from teachers, to department head, to assistant principal, to principal. Someone in the line must have the expertise and ensure that the delivery of the curriculum through classroom instruction is as it should be.

He went on to say that, if this is not the case, the teachers will starve:

> They are going to starve. Eventually they will starve. It is important that the department head function as the in-house consultant or the staff expert/leader, or the teachers' instruction will starve.

As well, department heads will need time to do this work:

> They will need time to do the job. They need to serve as mentors in an advisory capacity, and they need to be an absolute expert in their subject area. If called upon by the teachers, they should have the ability to assist the teacher in their subject area.

He concluded,

> This whole notion of where the decision-making is really taking place is where the geese that are laying the golden eggs are resting right now. I believe the superintendents of today understand this and are doing what is necessary to hatch the golden eggs.

Site- or school-based management requires subject department heads to work as curriculum leaders in their schools, and it supports that role.

The supervisor who participated in the senior leadership interviews expressed his views on the leadership qualities required of site-based leaders. His remarks focused on the work of the principal and are applicable to all line staff who serve as curriculum leaders, including secondary subject department heads:

> The people who have the vision, who understand children's learning, these principals are out there doing a very good job. However, there are principals who are inexperienced. The change from the focus on curriculum and working from a philosophy, a consistent philosophy, to management put a lot of focus on the principal and a lot of responsibility. I think there are more differences among principals now because some of them have the background and have risen to the occasion, surrounded themselves with knowledgeable teachers and are doing very fine work in the schools. At the same time, there are many principals who are bogged down in the bits and pieces, and they do not know which way to go. They don't have the understanding, and they cannot call in the consultants without paying. Because it costs money, they do not call in the consultants for support and assistance. So I think the differences from school to school are greater.

Site-based management is the way of managing in postmodern schools in Alberta and other parts of North America. It is important in a decentralized school district to clarify the "mission" or the "business" of the organization. Curriculum delivery should be the mission or the business of school districts in Alberta. Site-based management is considered the best way for organizing, dispersing, utilizing, and monitoring resources allocated to achieving the mission or the business of schools: curriculum delivery that produces the highest level of achievement possible for every student in every school in Alberta. School leaders in line positions of authority, such as principals and subject department heads, must function as curriculum leaders in their schools. They should not focus on the bits and pieces of their work but, rather, have an educated and articulated vision of what is required to create a school focused on the mission of the organization—curricula delivery that supports student achievement. This, in turn, should support the highest level of achievement possible for every student in every secondary subject department and school in the school district.

Further Reflections

Through my work as a qualitative researcher, I have developed greater knowledge and understanding of the role of the English department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies. As a doctoral student engaged in this research process, I have learned a great deal about myself and my research that I did not anticipate learning at the beginning of my doctoral journey.

I learned how difficult it was for me to write autobiographically. Throughout my preparation as a secondary high school English teacher, use of the personal pronoun *I* in texts was all but forbidden. In the postmodern classroom, this is no longer the case. Moving from the personal, or a reader's response, to the formal, or a critical response, is now presented to students as an authentic process for demonstrating what they have learned. At the start of my doctoral program, I understood this on a theoretical level but not on a practical level. I was not prepared to reveal or uncover myself as was required by others, in particular my candidacy examining committee, to demonstrate my capacity and competency to conduct this study. Having experienced the process and examined the development of my hermeneutic lens through the process, I have gained a feeling of personal relief about my past and have a better understanding of myself as a person, an educator, and a researcher. I have grown and matured; I am more comfortable with myself. In other words, I know the ground I stand upon and will move forward with greater confidence about my place in the education community and what I can contribute. I am thankful for my journey as a doctoral student and feel fortunate and blessed to have realized this opportunity.

I understand that I am not the only person whose hermeneutic perspective was developed early in life, a perspective gained from being a minority member of a

community. The minority position can be the result of religion, travel, or a variety of other situations. Whatever the cause, people impacted by their personal experiences come away with a better understanding of the multiple realities present among and between human beings. This understanding has been important and ever present in my work as an English teacher. My hermeneutic perspective has enhanced my work as a subject department head and my present work as an International Baccalaureate English teacher and school program coordinator. Students enrolled in the program come from various religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds and bring their multiple realities to our English classrooms. The hermeneutic perspective I have developed over time enables me to create a climate of tolerance and understanding for my students' perspectives and honours their contributions to the learning that takes place in the classroom.

I have also learned that site-based management in its conception had as its mission the delivery of instruction. The better management of educational dollars was not an end in itself but, rather, a management vehicle or framework that set out to husband educational dollars in ways that supported teachers working with the best resource base possible to support the highest levels of student achievement possible. Along the way it appears that site-based managed districts were unable to see the trees for the forest, or the students for the management system. Site-based management is here to stay and is, from my point of view, the best management system available to date for managing our educational resources. However, it is important that the mission of school organizations—student achievement—be the focus of or the reason for the use of site-based management practices. The management system is the vehicle for resource management in our organizations, not its mission. This is important information for educators who work in site-based managed

school districts. To ensure that site-based management is the vehicle but not the mission, all leaders in educational organizations, regardless of position, should view themselves first and foremost as curriculum leaders.

Education requires leaders who focus on student achievement and see the whole picture, not just the bits and pieces. This holistic perspective and role definition are required to assist them in charting the direction of their schools more effectively and more appropriately in a complicated multidimensional, postmodern environment. By serving as curriculum leaders, educational leaders will define themselves appropriately for the needs of the culture or context of educational organizations. I believe that future programs for the development of potential curriculum leaders should be interdisciplinary and, in becoming so, will better prepare our leaders to lead our schools today and in the future.

In conducting this research, I realized that I had served as a curriculum leader in my role as a secondary English department head. Throughout the decades, others, such as the senior administrators interviewed in this study and former district supervisor Dr. Margaret Stevenson, have served as curriculum leaders. Curriculum leaders have used the emerging trends, initiatives, and mandates of their eras to advance student achievement. I used a variety of initiatives for this purpose, such as the development of a department curriculum handbook or the fostering of teacher leaders within our department. Irma High School's department head used the Quick Start Project, and Holden High School's department head used the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies to spearhead their improvement of student achievement. Leaders who serve as curriculum-change agents and curriculum leaders do so by using the external and internal attributes of their era to create opportunities to serve. Presently, curriculum leaders are poised for

greater visibility and acknowledgement of their importance and contributions as site-based management refocuses and becomes a management system with student achievement, not system management, as its mission. Curriculum leaders will be recognized as the type of leaders required in the next phase, development, and maturation of educational organizations equipped to function in a postmodern world.

Sharon, one of the department heads used as a case study, is a superior and passionate curriculum leader. She is an educator with heart and moral purpose. I learned that to work as she does in our current educational climate takes passion, drive, a superordinate work ethic, a love of learning, and tremendous personal sacrifice. I believe that we can all take aspects of Sharon's work and incorporate them into our own practice as curriculum leaders. However, all that she does cannot be totally replicated by or demanded of all. Researching her work was an honour for me. Her story enriched my understanding of the secondary subject department head as a curriculum leader and stands as a model of what can be accomplished when "all the right stuff" is in place.

I believe that many educators in all levels of our organizations, ironically, do not value formal education or its contribution to student achievement and educational leadership. It is time for the education community to move beyond valuing personal communication skills as the only important qualification for our leaders. Both communication skills or interpersonal skills and formal education credentials are required for leading effectively. I would never employ the services of a heart surgeon solely for his or her communication skills. First and foremost, formal training and clinical capabilities must be in place. What educational leaders communicate must be grounded in a knowledge base steeped in research, theory, and practice. It will be very difficult to find leaders

capable of leading our schools in the complex educational environments present today and in the future unless we acknowledge the contribution of formal education and training to how leaders lead. I also believe that if we do not make this change from within, our failure to lead in this area will prompt change driven from the external community through organizations such as our learning ministry. At present, the communities outside the education community have a greater understanding of the importance of formal education for educational leaders and will demand nothing less for the leaders responsible for the academic achievement of their children.

Through this study, I have become more knowledgeable about the use of motifs and metaphors. In my work as an English teacher, metaphors have been a staple in my classroom. Postmodern writers have discussed the place of metaphors in shaping and making sense of postmodern educational environments and the work of their leaders. The use of metaphor was a natural choice to bring form and structure to these case studies. In particular, the album, the picture or snapshot, and the lens, as so clearly described in Wilkinson's poem "Lens," brought form, structure, and symbolic meaning to the presentation and discussion of the case studies. The creation of this study and its motifs and metaphors has been a source of passion and joy throughout my journey as a doctoral researcher.

Implications for Educational Practice

The work of the department heads at Holden High School and Irma High School provides an excellent insight into the role of the department head as a curriculum-change agent. Their work was focused on the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies in Alberta. Their case studies provide a detailed description of the

phenomenon being studied. By interacting with the department heads, their supervisors, and their staff through the interviewing process, I was able to describe the department head's role as a curriculum-change agent or curriculum leader through the lens of the participants in this study, who supported and carried out the implementation of the newest program of studies. This study provides a picture of the role of the English department heads at Irma High School and Holden High School through description of the varied and multiple realities of the department heads, their supervisors, and their staffs. The descriptions of the work of the department heads are more similar than different, with the differences being related to different stages of the implementation process, brought about by the first case study being completed three years before the other. This time difference provides us with snapshots of the role of the department head at different points in the curriculum-implementation process.

The intent of the two case studies was not to apply their findings to other situations. However, it is possible that the detailed description present in this text will provide readers with insights into the role of the department head as a curriculum leader or curriculum-change agent, which they might then use to enhance their implementation of the newest programs of study in secondary subject departments, as will the definitions of *curriculum leader* and *curriculum leadership* I wrote for the purposes of this study. This perspective is supported by Firestone's (1993) "case-to-case transfer" view of external validity, in which it is the reader who determines what in a study fits his or her situation. The detailed description provided in this study will make that possible.

With Firestone's (1993) "case-to-case transfer" view of external validity in mind, I considered what from this study I would incorporate into my work as an English

department head serving as a curriculum leader focused on the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies. It became apparent, after writing my autobiography, preparing the literature review, conducting interviews, and writing the case studies, that I had served as a curriculum leader in my role as a secondary English department head and that my understanding of this work has deepened because of this study. Subsequent changes in my work as a curriculum leader will not be a matter of revolution but a matter of refinement, a matter of degree created by a sharper focus on the work at hand because, like the speaker in Anne Wilkinson's poem says, "My working eye is muscled/With a curious tension/Stretched and open/ . . . trusting in its vision."

In the future, if I am to again serve as an English department head, I will attempt in my role as a curriculum-change agent to be strategic in my efforts to manage, mandate, and motivate my department colleagues as we work together to implement the English language arts program of studies. These strategic efforts will be supported by the personal traits I will bring to my work, such as a positive reputation with colleagues, improved interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, a capacity for hard work, a dry humour, the ability to have fun, and an undying passion for my life's work. As well, my research skills, honed through the doctoral process, and my deeper knowledge of curriculum matters will assist me in making appropriate choices about curriculum implementation. Now better prepared and qualified for the position, I will strive to create a collaborative environment to further teachers' understanding of the English language arts program of studies to continuously improve student achievement.

I will be more deliberate in my use of technology to support curriculum work and to carry out the managerial aspects of the position. E-mail will be used to conduct the

daily business of the department and share school and district information. The resources collected and stored in the department office, for all department members to access, will be stored and shared electronically, as well as in the department filing cabinets. This will assist with timely and comprehensive sharing of curriculum documents, lesson plans, and assessment tools, such as unit and final exams, as well as school, district, and ministry of learning information.

My role as a lead teacher and network builder will be deliberate and ongoing. I will share program and technical expertise in a variety of ways, depending on the needs of the department's teachers. This may involve a weekly e-mail memo, department meetings, course meetings, one-on-one meetings, classroom visitations, and inviting teachers to observe in my classroom. I will facilitate teachers' visitations in our department and other departments in our district. Teachers will be encouraged to share the information gained from classroom visitations with department colleagues to assist with the ongoing implementation of the program of studies. The collegial professional networks developed will work in horizontal and vertical directions, acknowledging collaborative professional work originating from the expertise available at all levels within the bureaucratic organizational structure present in Alberta secondary schools.

To sustain ongoing curriculum change for the purpose of improved student achievement, my department will, through deliberate organization on my part and that of department members, function as a professional learning community. Department retreats will occur yearly, teachers will attend or present at professional development activities within and outside the school, research pertinent to our work will be shared via e-mail, and coursework at the university will be encouraged, as will writing for professional

publications. Our personal and group successes in improving student achievement will be celebrated informally and formally, with our lunchroom serving as a supportive, positive daily connecting point for all department members.

With collaboration can come conflict. In my role as a curriculum leader and lead teacher, I will work to minimize conflict between department members. If conflicts do arise, I will take the initiative to bring up the conflicts with those involved, debate department issues, and lead the department discussions and problem-solving sessions until the matters are resolved. I will accept department decisions and, only when necessary and in the best interests of the students in our department, will I mandate a decision. My role as a lead teacher will support collegial decision-making whenever possible, and I will rely on my role and position in the bureaucracy only when necessary. The reality of working within the policies and practices that govern education in Alberta will be a given. Hopefully, my department members and colleagues will describe me as a department head willing to serve as a curriculum leader focused on improving student achievement with the right mix of head, heart, and service guiding her work.

As well as being useful for "case-to-case transfer" (Firestone, 1993), this case study contributes to an area in curriculum leadership research that is lacking: the topic of secondary department heads responsible for curriculum leadership in urban secondary schools. The focus of the research has been on the work of the principal as the curriculum leader in secondary schools. Given the decentralization of school districts and site-based management, which are practised in school districts in Alberta and around the globe, the demands placed on principals and the complexities of the curricula in urban secondary schools has made it impossible for principals to serve as the sole curricula leaders in their

schools. If curriculum leadership is distributed to department heads, other administrators, specialists, and teachers, it will dramatically affect the role of secondary principals (Brown, 1993, p. 3).

This case study on the role of the department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies will contribute to this area of research, curriculum leadership in education, and in doing so will contribute to what will hopefully be an ongoing conversation about who will serve and how they will serve as curriculum leaders in postmodern secondary schools. Senior leadership staff, principals, and school trustees should review the literature and research on the role of secondary department heads as curriculum leaders in secondary schools. This will assist in the selection and training of secondary subject department heads, as well as help principals to understand the possibilities for shared curriculum leadership in large, urban, site-based managed secondary schools.

Implications for Further Research

This study has provided a detailed description of the role of the department head as a change agent in the implementation of the newest English language arts program of studies in Alberta. Additional descriptive studies of the role of secondary subject heads would provide a rich source of information that could expand the understanding of the curriculum leadership required for curriculum implementation in secondary schools.

This study was carried out in a large urban secondary school in Alberta. The political climate at both the provincial and the local levels in Alberta involves decentralized decision-making. Further research on the decentralizing (site-based management) of budgeting in more urban secondary schools in Alberta and in other

provinces and countries could shed light on the curriculum leadership roles played by leadership staff other than principals.

Further study into the qualifications and the roles and responsibilities of secondary department heads would help to further the understanding of the role of secondary department heads as curriculum leaders in urban decentralized school districts. Through this work, researchers could assist in shaping leadership roles suited to the work done by department heads in postmodern urban secondary schools. Moving from an oral tradition to a written set of qualifications and roles and responsibilities will help to make educational leadership more recognizable as a professional enterprise in the education community and in the other communities with which educational leaders interact.

This study was conducted prior to and during the three-year implementation period of the newest Alberta English language arts program of studies. Although the outcomes of the work of the department head were addressed in the section of the study on the roles and responsibilities of the subject department head, these outcomes are not the primary focus of the study. Other research into the outcomes, such as student assessment for learning realized as the result of secondary department heads serving as curriculum-change agents within their departments, would be a useful contribution to the literature on curriculum leadership in Alberta and other provinces in Canada.

At the time this study was conducted, funding cutbacks in Alberta were beginning to affect curriculum implementation. How factors such as funding cutbacks affect the ability of educational leaders to work as curriculum-change agents would be an informative contribution to the research on the role of curriculum-change agents in urban secondary schools in Alberta and other provinces.

Epilogue

Through this study, I have increased my understanding of the curriculum leadership required of secondary department heads to work as curriculum-change agents for curriculum implementation in Alberta's urban secondary schools. In my time as an English department head, I served as a curriculum leader. I learned that it is critical and essential to define and record the work of department heads and define who is qualified to take on the role of the department head who works as a curriculum leader. In doing so, I became more knowledgeable and confirmed my beliefs about the place of secondary department heads as members of the leadership teams that work as curriculum leaders in postmodern secondary schools. As well, I came to understand the need for more knowledge to add to the educational research literature on this topic. I will use my understanding of the role of curriculum leaders in urban decentralized secondary schools in Alberta in my continued work as a curriculum leader.

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APPENDIX A

DEFINITIONS OF CHANGE-AGENT STRATEGIES[3]

Strategies Used by Change Agents

A *strategy* is defined as a carefully planned method of translating theory and assumptions into action in order to achieve a goal. The classification of strategies is based on the system developed by Matthew Miles (1984). The 15 strategies are defined as follows.

Providing technical mastery: helping individuals develop competence in specific techniques.

Resource linking: a dissemination process that involves transmitting ideas from outside researchers and trainers and building them into a teacher's repertoire of skills through ongoing training, or introducing clients with needs to resource people.

Solution giving: providing innovation or other products of research as solutions to the perceived needs of others, often initiated without negotiation.

Training of groups: running workshops and courses to teach understandings and skills.

Coaching of individuals: training and teaching one-to-one using clinical observation and conferences in the teacher's classroom.

Demonstrating, modelling: demonstrating skills or techniques to assist understanding and to serve as a model for the learners to copy.

Energizing, motivating: initiating awareness and involvement; building confidence and a willingness to improve; establishing a rationale for the techniques being taught.

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[3] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

Supporting the client emotionally: relaxing tension and dispelling fear; reassuring and stressing positives with sensitivity and empathy.

Developing a support structure: creating a network or procedure for the support of clients, involving their teaching peers, their supervisors, or both.

Monitoring, evaluating: judging the effectiveness of a teacher's performance in order to stimulate change.

Networking among clients: building relationships between clients, helping them help each other, especially through peer coaching, in this case.

Collaborative problem-solving: shared involvement with clients in the problem-solving process.

Supported planning: assisting clients through the planning process.

Resource adding: supplying materials and ideas to clients.

Controlling client action: exercise of power, albeit expert power used with client consent, to direct the actions of clients.

APPENDIX B

DEFINITIONS OF CHANGE-AGENT SKILLS[4]

Skills Used by Change Agents

Skills are defined as requisite knowledge or ability, or special qualifications to perform the tasks involved in the role. The focus in analyzing the data will be on attributes and capabilities of the change agent expressed with a qualitative description by informants (e.g., the trainer does this well or poorly). The classification of skills is based on the revised system developed by Miles and colleagues (1985). The 20 skills are defined and illustrated as follows.

Interpersonal ease: relating simply and directly to others. Examples: Very open person . . . Can deal with people . . . Nice manner . . . Has always been able to deal with staff . . . You have to be able to work with people, know when to stroke, when to hold back, when to assent, know which buttons to push . . . Gives individuals time to vent feelings, lets them know her interest in them . . . She can talk to anyone.

Group functioning: understanding group dynamics, able to facilitate teamwork. Examples: Has ability to get a group moving . . . He started with nothing and then made us come together as a united body . . . Good group facilitator . . . Lets the discussion flow.

Training/doing workshops: direct instruction, teaching adults in a systematic way. Examples: Gave workshops on how to develop plans . . . Taught us consensus method with five-finger game . . . He prepares a great deal and enjoys it . . . He has the right chemistry and can impart knowledge at the peer level.

Educational general (master teacher): wide educational experience, able to impart skills to others. Examples: Excellent teaching skill, taught all the grades, grade

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[4] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

leader work, resource teacher, has done staff development with teachers . . . Title I programs where I was always assisting, supporting, being resource person to teachers . . . A real master teacher, much teacher-training work.

Program knowledgeability: knowledge of school subject matter. Examples: Demonstrating expertise in a subject area . . . She showed them the value of educational trips, simulation games and how to involve the community . . . Knows the content component of the program of studies . . . Knows a great deal about teaching, especially reading . . . What she doesn't know, she finds out.

Technical expertise: understands and can teach and demonstrate to others how to implement the outcomes required in the program of studies.

Administrative/organizational: defining and structuring work, activities, time. Examples: Highly organized, has everything prepared in advance . . . I could take an idea and turn it into a program . . . Well organized, good at prioritizing, scheduling, knows how to set things up.

Initiative taking: starting or pushing activities, moving directly toward action. Examples: Assertive, clear sense of what he wanted to do . . . Ability to poke and prod where needed to get things done . . . I had to assert myself so he didn't step on me.

Trust/rapport-building: developing a sense of safety, openness, reduced threat on part of clients; good relationship-building. Examples: A breath of fresh air. In two weeks he had gained confidence of staff . . . She had become one of the gang, eats lunch with them . . . A skilled seducer (knows how to get people to ask for help) . . . I have not repeated what they said, so trust was built . . . Even those who knew everything before

now let her help because they aren't threatened . . . She was so open and understanding that I stopped feeling funny.

Support: providing nurturing relationship, positive affective relationship. Examples: Able to accept harsh things teachers say. "It's OK, everyone has these feelings" . . . A certain compassion for others. Always patient, never critical, very enthusiastic.

Confrontation: direct expression of negative information without generating negative affect. Examples: Can challenge in a positive way . . . She will lay it on the line about what works and what won't . . . He is talkative and factual. His strength is being outspoken . . . He can point out things and get away with being blunt . . . Able to tell people they were wrong and they accept it.

Conflict mediation: resolving or improving situations where multiple incompatible interests are in play. Examples: Effected a compromise between upper-and lower-grade teachers on use of checklist. Teachers resented the chair's autocratic behaviour. So she spoke openly to him about it. Things have been considerably better . . . The principal is very vindictive. He was constantly mediating, getting her to soften her attitude . . . Can handle people who are terribly angry, unreasonable, keeps cool.

Collaboration: creating relationships where influence is mutually shared. Examples: Deals on the same level we do, puts in his ideas . . . I've never seen a time that teachers felt they were told to do something . . . Leads and directs us but not in a way like professors and students, but as peers . . . Doesn't judge us or put us down . . . Has ideas of her own, like in math, but flexible enough to maintain the teachers' way of doing things too.

Confidence-building: strengthening client's sense of efficacy, belief in self. Examples: She makes all feel confident and competent. Doesn't patronize . . . "You can do it." She'll help . . . He has a way of drawing out teachers' ideas. He injects a great deal but you feel powerful . . . She makes people feel like a million in themselves. Like a shot of adrenalin boosting your mind, ego, talents, and professional expertise . . . Her attitude: "Try it, you'll like it."

Diagnosing individuals: forming a valid picture of the needs/problems of an individual teacher or administrator as a basis for action. Examples: You need to realize that when a teacher says she has the worst class, that means, "I need help" . . . He has an ability to focus in on problems and get rid of the verbiage . . . picking up the real message . . . sensitive, looks at teacher priorities first . . . knows when an off-hand joke is a signal for help.

Diagnosing organizations: forming a valid picture of the needs/problems of a school as an organization (including its culture) as a basis for action. Examples: Analyzing a situation, recognizing problems, jumping ahead of where you are to where you want to go . . . When I analyzed beyond the surface, the way the principal was using meetings for administrative purposes . . . Anticipates problems schools face . . . Brought in report on reading/math and attendance, helped us know where we should be going . . . Helped team look at the data in the assessment package.

Managing/controlling: orchestrating the improvement process; coordinating activities, time and people; direct influence on others. Examples: She filled all the gaps in terms of legwork, preparing materials and coordinating our contact with school and district administrators . . . A taskmaster and keeps the process going . . . Makes people do

things rather than doing the process himself . . . He sets a pace, like the bouncing ball on songs.

Resource bringing: locating and providing information, materials, practices, equipment useful to clients. Examples: If it's broken, he fixes it. He uses his network to get us supplies . . . Brings ideas that she has seen work elsewhere . . . Had the newest research methods, articles, ideas, waters it down for our needs . . . Brought manipulative materials for help with multiplication.

Demonstration: modelling new behaviour in classrooms or meetings. Examples: He's a great storyteller—gets the kids very interested . . . Willing to go into classrooms and take risks . . . Modelling . . . Was real, did demos with their classes . . . Watching someone else teach my class makes me reflect on what I'm doing . . . Showed the chair by his own behaviour how to be more open.

Independence-building: getting people to implement social inquiry skills and other student-centred learning strategies in their classes themselves without direction from the change agent.

APPENDIX C

DEFINITION OF OUTCOMES AFFECTED BY CHANGE AGENT[5]

Outcomes of the Change-Agent Activities

Outcomes are considered to be anything in regard to teachers, students, administrators, or schools as a unit that result from the interventions of the change agents. The 10 outcomes, based on the classification of Miles (1984), are defined as follows.

Short-run success: small achievements made that enable other achievements. For example: The change agent provided resources in order to gain legitimacy.

Use of specific products: teachers use products or materials that they hadn't previously used.

Positive relationships: client satisfaction with positive relationship with the change agent.

Satisfaction with the program: the extent to which the formal program is being carried out, usually by teachers being able to perform the new skills or techniques in their classroom.

School climate change: feelings, norms, sentiments have changed (e.g., there has been a change in the content of lunch-table conversations).

Organizational change: changes in the structure or procedures of the school.

Student impact: students have a favourable attitude to the new teaching method, or have changed behaviour in some way, or have changed in achievement.

Capacity building: improved capability or skills of teachers or school staff; staff are better at doing things.

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[5] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

Institutionalization: program features, structures, and procedures are built into regular, ongoing classroom instruction.

Energized, motivated clients: the clients have a desire for improving, and/or are enthused about the program.

APPENDIX D

PROFILE OF DEPARTMENT HEAD[6]

Please answer the following profile questions to give us a picture (snapshot) of the way you work in your program. Try to indicate which behaviours are most typical of you.

1. Rank the following items on a scale of 1–5, from most typical (1) to least typical (5). Rank only those descriptors that apply to you.

   In general, your *main priorities* as an assistance person are to:

   ____ aid in the improvement *process* in schools and/or individuals

   ____ expand the *knowledge* of clients

   ____ bring *resources* to the clients

   ____ aid the change with the development of *products*

   ____ other (please explain): _____

2. Select up to six items that apply to you as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

   Your style is:

   _____ manipulative
   _____ intuitive
   _____ active
   _____ low-key
   _____ facilitative
   _____ reflective
   _____ passive
   _____ directive
   _____ working alone
   _____ characterized by a sense of humour
   _____ Other: _____

   _____ situation-specific
   _____ supportive
   _____ collaborative
   _____ businesslike
   _____ expert as opposed to collegial
   _____ high-key
   _____ outgoing
   _____ collegial as exposed to expert
   _____ systematic
   _____ characterized by a positive sense of self

[6] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

3. Select up to six items that apply to you as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

_____	talking	_____	training, doing workshops
_____	listening	_____	demonstrating as master teacher
_____	interpersonal ease	_____	giving knowledge of educational content
_____	group functioning	_____	administration/organization
_____	reading	_____	ability to take things with a grain of salt
_____	Other: _____		

4. Select six or fewer items that apply to you as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical):

_____	initiative taking	_____	trust/rapport-building
_____	support	_____	confrontation
_____	conflict mediation	_____	collaboration
_____	confidence building	_____	diagnosing individual needs
_____	managing/controlling	_____	diagnosing school's needs
_____	resource-bringing	_____	demonstration/modelling
_____	Other: _____		

5. Select up to six items that apply to you as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

The following *strategies* are most often used by you:

_____	solution-giving	_____	providing technical assistance
_____	resource-adding	_____	energizing/motivating client
_____	re-educating client	_____	controlling client action
_____	supported planning	_____	collaborative problem-solving
_____	monitoring/evaluating	_____	developing support structure
_____	clinical one-to-one conferencing	_____	supporting client emotionally
_____	Other: _____		

6. Select up to a total of 6 items that apply to you as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

The following *outcomes* have been realized due to your work:

_____	use of new products	_____	short-run successes/decisions
_____	program model implemented	_____	satisfaction in relationship with clients
_____	school climate change	_____	organizational change
_____	student impact	_____	capacity building
_____	institutionalization of model	_____	too early to identify outcomes
_____	energized/motivated clients vs. burnout	_____	supporting client emotionally
_____	Other: _____		

Your name:_____ Date: _____

Any comments you have about this profile:

APPENDIX E

SUPERVISOR AND TEACHER PROFILE OF DEPARTMENT HEAD[7]

Please answer the following profile questions to give us a picture (snapshot) of the way _____ functions as an assistance person. Try to indicate which behaviours are most typical of her or him.

1. Rank the following items from most typical (1) to least typical (5). Rank only those descriptors that apply to _____.

   In general, his or her *main priorities* as an assistance person are to:

   _____ aid the improvement *process* in schools and/or individuals

   _____ expand the *knowledge* of clients

   _____ bring *resources* to the clients

   _____ aid the change with the development of *products*

   _____ other (please explain): _____

2. Select up to six items that apply to _____ as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

   _____'s style is:

_____	manipulative	_____	situation-specific
_____	intuitive	_____	supportive
_____	active	_____	collaborative
_____	low-key	_____	businesslike
_____	facilitative	_____	expert as opposed to collegial
_____	reflective	_____	high-key
_____	passive	_____	outgoing

[7] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

_____ directive
_____ working alone
_____ characterized by a sense of humour
_____ systematic
_____ Other: _____

_____ collegial as exposed to expert
_____ characterized by a sense of self

3. Select up to six items that apply to _____ as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

The following *general skills* are essential to the way _____ works:

_____ talking
_____ listening
_____ interpersonal ease
_____ group functioning
_____ reading
_____ Other: _____

_____ training, doing workshops
_____ demonstrating as master teacher
_____ giving knowledge of educational content
_____ administration/organization
_____ ability to take things with a grain of salt

4. Select six or fewer items that apply to _____ as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

_____ initiative taking
_____ support
_____ conflict mediation
_____ managing/controlling
_____ resource-bringing
_____ demonstration/modelling
_____ Other: _____

_____ trust/rapport-building
_____ confrontation
_____ collaboration
_____ diagnosing individual needs
_____ diagnosing school's needs

5. Select up to six items that apply to _____ as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

The following *strategies* are most often used by _____:

_____ resolution-giving
_____ resource-adding
_____ resource-linking
_____ re-educating client
_____ supported planning
_____ monitoring/evaluating
_____ clinical one-to-one conferencing
_____ developing support structure
_____ Other: _____

_____ providing technical assistance
_____ energizing/motivating client
_____ controlling client action
_____ collaborative problem-solving
_____ supporting client emotionally

6. Select up to six items that apply to _____ as an assistance person and rank them from 1 (most typical) to 6 (least typical).

The following outcomes have been realized due to _____'s work:

_____ use of new products
_____ program model implemented
_____ school climate change
_____ student impact
_____ institutionalization of model
_____ energized/motivated clients vs. burnout
_____ Other: _____

_____ short-run successes/decisions
_____ satisfaction in relationship with clients
_____ organizational change
_____ capacity building
_____ too early to identify outcomes

Your name:_____ Date: _____

Any comments you have about this profile:

APPENDIX F

OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW WITH SUPERVISOR[8]

1. Background

   a. Name

   b. Job title (or role)

   c. How long have you been in this job?

2. First, I'd like to recheck my understanding of where things stand in the curriculum-implementation process at this moment.

   a. Overview of the process in this school

   b. Operating methods

   c. Role of department heads

   d. Ways in which teachers become involved

   e. Support for the process within the district

   f. Anything else I should know about the process at the moment?

3. Now for the rest of the time, I'd like to take a careful look at the role of the department head in your school.

   a. Can you give me a sketch of how _____ was functioning, what was _____ like at the point that you hired _____? What were the strengths, the knowledge, the attitudes, and skills that you saw? (ASK FOR EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS)

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[8] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

b. What do you think _____ has learned since assuming the English teacher's role? In what ways has _____ grown and developed, become more effective?

c. Just how did this learning take place? What sources or mechanisms were involved? (Check for training, supervision, learning from experience, reading, partnerships, meetings, etc.) Maybe you can give me some specific examples or incidents to make it concrete.

d. People vary a lot in the ways that they work in schools. Thinking of _____, what strategies or approaches would you say _____ is especially good at? Let's take a look at the profile you filled out for _____ (Question 5). Could you give some examples or incidents that would illustrate the strategies that you ranked high (1, 2, or 3) (GET AT LEAST TWO INCIDENTS).

e. And what would you say are the strongest skills that _____ has? Here again, let's look at the profile (Questions 3 and 4). Can you give me some examples that would illustrate these skills, especially high-ranking ones?

f. Do you have any comments about the style of _____, especially the items you ranked highly on the profile (Question 2).

g. Anything else you'd like to tell me about _____?

4.

a. Do you have any general comments or thoughts about what it takes to be an effective department head in your school?

b. Which of these skills do you think are teachable and learnable, and which probably not (you just have to pick the right people in the first place)?

c. If you were designing a training or learning program for department heads, what would the key ingredients be as far as you're concerned?

d. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX G

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS[9]

This interview is aimed at getting acquainted with your activities. It is not an evaluation. It is a study of how department heads go about assisting teachers' implementation of a new curriculum in schools. The general idea is to get a realistic, concrete picture of what you do and how you feel about it. This will help to make clear what it takes to assist teachers with implementing a curriculum.

1. Background
   - a. Name
   - b. Job title (or role)
   - c. Thumbnail sketch of your job: what you do, who you work with
   - d. How long have you been in this job?
     - ask for educational and non-educational jobs preceding this one
     - non-degree training (workshops, courses, etc.)
   - e. What's your educational background?
     - where attended, level (formal ed.)
     - non-degree training (workshops, courses, etc.)

2. Could you pick a day sometime this or last week that was reasonably typical, and tell me what you did that day?
   - a. What happened first thing?
   - b. And then? (Encourage movement through day, ask when not clear)

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[9] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

c. Are there any other types of activities in your job that didn't happen during this day?

- Get brief description

3.

a. Can you give me a brief history of your school's involvement with curriculum implementation?

b. What was the status of the curriculum-implementation process before you assumed your role?

c. Did you receive additional release time to work on curriculum implementation in the school?

d. Who was department head prior to you and what happened to that person?

e. I'd like to know all about the various phases of the curriculum-implementation process in your school. (Make sure all these specific items are covered for each phase: time goals, priorities, what actually happened, approaches or strategies, problems and dilemmas [with specific examples], other people involved and what they did, key skills used by the computer specialist, and others.)

f. Now we're up to the present in the story of this school, could I ask you about what you think have been the results so far?

- get a list
- probe for how person knows this, what based on (if not clear)

g. Looking at these results, I'm wondering if you can say whether your work impacted on them directly—results where you can see that your work specifically made a difference. Any of them like that?

- note degree of certainty about impact on own work

h. What's your guess about what will happen next with the school in its work on the curriculum (in the next few months)?

4.

a. Could you describe what you think are the advantages of having a department head in schools?

b. Do you anticipate any change in the position in the near future?

c. What do you anticipate will happen in the near future in further implementation of the curriculum (e.g., the mandated teaching strategies)?

5. Anything else you think I should know at this time?

APPENDIX H

SECOND INTERVIEW WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS[10]

I am trying to get as concrete and realistic a picture as possible.

1. I'd like to look over the profile you filled out about your work as a department head.

   a. In question 2, you ranked descriptors of your style. Could you give me an example or an incident from your work that would illustrate those you ranked 1, 2 or 3?

   b. Repeat for question 3, general skills.

   c. Repeat for question 4, specific skills.

   d. Repeat for question 5, strategies.

Now I'd like to shift gears a little for the rest of the time. I'd like to focus on you and your skills and how they show up in the schools and people you've worked with. In essence, it's a look at you and how you've learned and developed as a department head. Every person is different, and I'd like to get a good flavour of how your own learning has gone during your work in that role. I'll divide this into three periods: before you assumed that role, the early phases of your work in that role, and later on.

2. As I recall it, you formally became your school's department head _____ (date). Tell me about your involvement with curriculum implementation before you became a department head.

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[10] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

a. Can you think back to that point—just when you were about to start work? What would you say were your main strong points, things you could do well, things that you knew would be helpful in this job? PROBE FOR:

- SKILLS
- ATTITUDES
- KNOWLEDGE, CONCEPTS
- GET EXAMPLES, ILLUSTRATIONS

b. Can you say how you got to know those things, develop these skills? Was it courses, jobs, workshops, other learning experiences, or what?

c. When you began as department head, how were you oriented to the job? Was anything done to start you off, train you, etc.?

3. When you started work with the implementation process—I'd like to ask you some questions about the early phase—the first few months when you were just getting into it.

a. What kinds of challenges or difficulties did you face? To put it another way, what kinds of skills or knowledge did you realize you needed to function better in the job?

b. What things do you think you learned during that early time?

c. And can you say how you learned them? Maybe you could give me an incident or two that would illustrate it. (Might be in a training program, or while you were working.)

d. (IF NOT CLEAR) And could you tell me how you used that learning in your work in your school? An example?

e. During this whole period, what would you say helped your learning the most, and what hindered it?

f. And can you tell me how you got your support during the early period? Who or what did you go to and how did that help?

4. Now let's come forward in time, later on during your work as you understood your job better—how did things go?

a. First, what would you say were some of the main challenges or difficulties you faced in your work, things you wanted to know how to do better?

b. And what were some of the things you learned during that period?

c. And how did you learn them (PROBE for formal, informal courses, supervision, by experience, partnership, etc.)? Can you give me some specific examples or incidents?

d. (IF NOT CLEAR) And can you tell me how you used that particular learning in your work in your school?

e. Again, what seemed to help your learning most, and what hindered it?

f. And what about your support? Where did you go for it? Where did it come from?

5. Finally, have you had any recent learning experiences where you picked up something new that was helpful in your work? Tell me a little about them.

6. We've been focusing mostly on things you've learned that made a difference in the way you worked with people in your school. Stepping back a minute, I'm wondering if there are any things—personal or professional—that you've learned that may not show up in direct work in schools but are, nevertheless, important. Anything like that?

7. I'd like to reflect back with you over this "learning career" of yours that we've been discussing. Would you say that you have a preferred learning style, a strategy, a way you seem to like to learn things? What does it add up to?

8 Anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX I

OUTLINE OF INTERVIEW WITH TEACHERS[11]

(Start by alluding to introduction from department head.) This is a visit to get acquainted. It's not an evaluation of you, of your school program, or of the department head. I would like to get a picture of the curriculum-implementation process in your school. My main focus is how you have worked with other people along the way regarding getting help with the implementation process. I want to understand the story of how things have gone from the beginning until now. I have a number of specific questions to ask.

1. Background
    a. Name
    b. Job title (or role)
    c. Thumbnail sketch of your job: what you do, who you work with.

2. I'm interested in the *flavour* or feeling in the school.
    a. Can you give me three or four adjectives that would describe that?
    b. Can you think back to when the new curriculum was mandated?
        i. Did the school or district get involved?
        ii. How did you personally get involved with the implementing process?
    c. Could you give me a quick sketch of how well the curriculum is implemented in your school?
        i. How many teachers would you say are really involved?

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[11] *Note.* From Henderson (1993)

ii. What is the role of the principal?

iii. How is your program set up?

iv. Do you operate under any guidelines or policies?

v. What does the department head do?

3.

a. Describe your involvement since the earliest implementation of the curriculum here.

- What contact have you had with others who are involved? (Especially PROBE for communication, cooperation, peer coaching)
- Are there stages or phases that can be identified regarding *your* involvement with the process? Your *school's* involvement?

4.

a. Generally speaking, what do you see as the department head's main role?

b. What's been _____ main contribution to your school's program?

c. Can you give me a few adjectives to describe _____'s *style*, way of working with people?

d. What do you see as _____'s special strengths?

e. Could you tell me about a specific incident when _____ was especially helpful?

i. What did _____ do?

ii. What skills did you see _____ using in this situation?

f. Now let's take another incident.

i. What did _____ do, in detail?

ii. Why did you think this was helpful?

iii. What skills did you see _____ using in this situation?

g. Do you think _____ skills and strengths have changed since you've known her? (GET ILLUSTRATIONS AND EXAMPLES)

5. I'm interested in the curriculum implementation results. For (1) you, (2) other teachers, and (3) the students?

a. What changes have occurred?

b. Why do you think these changes happened?

c. In your opinion, how did _____ contribute to these results?

6. Do you have anything else to add?

APPENDIX J

CODES USED IN THE ANALYSIS OF DATA

Orange: Ways of curriculum implementation

Blue: Day in life of department head

Green: Roles and responsibilities of department head

Purple: Qualifications for the work of the department head

Pink: Contributions from Irma High School

Yellow: Attitudes toward curriculum implementation

Transcripts were read a minimum of five times. Coding was done on the fifth read, and if recoding was necessary, it was done on readings beyond the fifth reading.